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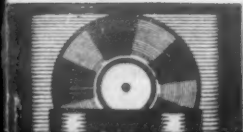
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September, 1941

SEVERAL readers have called our attention to a list of ten orchestral selections, purported to have been chosen by Sir Thomas Beecham as a beginner's collection, the list appearing in an article in the September issue of *Good Housekeeping*. What seems to bother our correspondents is the arbitrary choice of recordings, which the author of the article has made with an apparent disregard for the highly cherishable contributions to the phonograph that Sir Thomas himself has made.

All our correspondents were highly incensed at the recordings selected rather than at the list of compositions. Any list of ten selections is bound to be an arbitrary one, and perhaps just as controversial as a list of recommended recordings. But let me quote one correspondent in part: "It seems to me that the recommended recordings have not been chosen with an eye to the best available; there is room for differences of opinion in such matters, but it strikes me that such selections should have been made on the basis of the widest critical consensus of opinion. Certainly if this had been done, at least five of Sir Thomas' recordings would have been recommended in place of what are given."

Let us examine the list of works chosen by Sir Thomas—they are Mozart's *G minor Symphony*; Beethoven's *Leonore Overture No. 3*; Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*; Wagner's *Overture and Venusberg Music* from *Tannhäuser*; Wagner's *Die Meistersinger Prelude*; Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique Symphony*; Dvorak's *Fourth Symphony*; Bizet's *Arlésienne Suite No. 1*; Berlioz's *Roman Carnival Overture*; and Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*. The list is a good one and shows the catholicity of Sir Thomas' taste. No doubt most musicians would select a symphony of Beethoven (probably the *Fifth* or the *Third*) in place of the overture, Dvorak's *New World Symphony* in place of his *Fourth* (although the latter choice might prove more

(Continued on page 33)

What Dvorak Means to the Czechs

Paul Nettl

Dr. Nettl, now teaching at the Westminster Choir School, Princeton, New Jersey, was born in Bohemia. From 1920 to 1937 he taught at the Musicological Institute of the German University in Prague; and from 1937 to 1939 he was music director of the radio station in that city. He has published many books and articles on various phases of musical history.—Editor.

ON the eighth of September the whole musical world will celebrate the birthday of one of the greatest masters of modern times, Antonin Dvorak. But there are two peoples who have special claim on the privilege of honoring this "musical genius", as Brahms once called him — the Czech nation and the American one. There was a time when Dvorak was more famous in America than in his homeland, Bohemia. For Americans considered him an innovator and rejuvenator of American National Music when, in 1893, he conducted his *New World Symphony* for the first time, to the acclaim and jubilation of the entire American musical world. Nevertheless, Dvorak is and ever will be the genuine typification of the Bohemian minstrel who is, as it were, a symbol of the Czech people. In the rhythms of the Czech music there is something elemental, primitive, a kind of kinetic energy filled with an explosive and revolutionary urge. That this should be found among a people numerically so small, is surprising. And yet whoever will take the trouble to study the history of the Czechs will find that all times in the past, revolt against oppression, no matter of what kind, has been the keynote of their life. It was in Bohemia that the first signs of insubordination against the sway of the Roman popes and the Holy Roman Empire showed themselves, and it was there that the first and foremost of the modern-minded democrats, Masaryk, organized his people. In the rhythms of Dvorak's symphonies and dances we have the clearest expression of this revolutionary spirit that permeates the Czechs. The Czech language

itself, with all articles omitted, with its accumulation of consonants and dearth of vowels, gives us rhythms containing no upbeat and sounds aggressive. Nevertheless, we see the strange contrast to this in the emotional depth and tenderness of the musical soul of this people as it expresses itself in its traditional folk melodies. For the Czech is as good at loving as he is at fighting.

Both Dvorak and Smetana, the great heroes of modern Czech music, have understood the art of drawing upon this reservoir of the rhythmical and lyrical treasure of Czech folk music. But Dvorak's music is, if possible, more Czech than folk music itself, crystallizing all the essential elements.

Dvorak was born on September 8, 1841, in the rustic hamlet Nelahozeves (Muehlhausen). This village is about an hour's distance by express train from Prague. I still seem to see in my mind's eye the splendid baroque castle of the Princess Lobkowitz, around which the houses of the village are clustered, on the side of a vine-covered hill bordering the river Elbe. Dvorak's birthplace was a small cottage where his father plied his trade, that of the village butcher, and at the same time kept the inn. One of the "oldest inhabitants" of the village told me that the boy Anton often served him his beer and waited on him for his simple meal of sausage and bread. There was a story current in the village that young Anton had been by no means a child prodigy, but rather somewhat backward. Be that as it may, the teacher of the village school recognized the boy's musical gift and persuaded his father to send him to Prague

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to study at the Conservatory of Music. There he studied the organ and "minored" in the violin. When he graduated, he did not rank among the first. He became associated with the famous "Komzak" band in Prague, which played at dances and beer gardens and open air concerts for everybody. Of course, the young musician tried his hand at composition, in the style of Brahms and Schumann. Most of this work, Dvorak subsequently burned with his own hands. Somewhat later he entered the orchestra of the Czech National Opera House and it is a strange fact that this first opera was a German one, subject from English history: *Alfred the Great*, with a libretto adapted from a work by the German poet, Theodore Koerner. This opera was performed for the first and only time through my efforts in the Broadcasting Station at Prague.

In his youth Dvorak developed a kind of "inferiority complex", of which he was never to rid himself. His early reverses contributed to this. Not until Brahms had introduced the young Czech musician to the publisher Simrock did he win recognition. The well-known critic of the Vienna "Presse", Hanslick, who was famous on this side as well as in Europe, welcomed the rising star of a naive and new genius in Dvorak. Taubert performed his compositions in Berlin, principally the *Slavic Rhapsodies*, and Joachim and Richter carried his fame to England.

Dvorak and Smetana

Soon a certain contrast made itself felt between Dvorak and Smetana, and the nationalistically inclined Czechs objected to Dvorak's approach, which they considered "German", as opposed to that of the national musical hero, Smetana, the composer of the fundamentally Czech *Bartered Bride*, *Libussa* and *Dalibor*. In fact, Smetana had almost become a symbol for the Czech people, in his ability to embody the heroes of their country in music. Perhaps he was more conspicuously Czech than was Dvorak, but surely the latter unconsciously gave a deeper and keener expression of the essence of the Czech spirit than his great predecessor.

In some respects Dvorak can only be compared with Franz Schubert. He overflows with melodies, his invention has no

limits, and Brahms is said to have remarked that he burst with envy at the thought "of what the Czech can write, on the side", as it were. It may be true that now and then his work is somewhat diffuse and not sufficiently elaborated, a characteristic that he shares with Schubert. This is inherent in his naive and somewhat childlike temperament, as he was and remained a child during his whole life. Whenever he had a moment of leisure, even as a grown man, even here in New York, he would go to the railroad station and, like a little boy, watch the trains going in and out.

Dvorak and Smetana

Dvorak preferred patriotic and national subjects for his compositions. His *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, Op. 45, for orchestra, are steeped in Czech history and legend, though they lack any detailed program. They are attractive and ought to be played more frequently. Record lovers are well acquainted with the *Slavonic Dances*, which portray country life in Bohemia with its delight in songs and dances. Everything that stirs the emotion of the peasants — love, jealousy, pleasure in tasks well done, love of nature, simple piety — is expressed in these rhythms and notes. The orchestral work called *Husitska* embodies the idea of the religious and national reformer, Jan Hus. The growth of his revolt, in the Middle Ages, against the domination of the papacy and of the German Empire, and the gradual evolution of peace — in other words, the typical fate of the Czech people, anticipating the struggles of our own days — are here given musical expression. The piece makes use of the ancient Venceslav anthems and the Hussite Chorus. The importance of this overture cannot be overemphasized.

In addition, there should be mentioned the overture *Jan Kajetan Tyl*, the symphonic poems *The Noon-Day Witch*, *The Wood Dove*, *The Water Sprite*, and the choral ballad *The Ghostly Bride*. All these subjects originated in the Czech cycle of fairy tales and received poetical treatment by the Czech poet, Jaromir Erben, who had the greatest influence on Dvorak. Speaking of the shorter pieces for orchestra, I ought not to forget "The

Triple Overture", which consists of the following pieces: *In Nature*, *Carnaval*, and *Otello*. All these pieces, the second of which is most familiar in recording, have the same quality of feeling for Nature. At the same time, I would like to recommend to conductors the *Scherzo Capriccioso*, Op. 66, which is said to be the musical expression of the composer's rage at the fact that he could not succeed in writing a dramatically acceptable opera (1883). This piece is charged with lightning-like outbursts, like the discharge from powerful electric currents. His early *Symphonic Variations* ought to appeal to musicians: the exotic theme is taken from a work for men's chorus, *The Fiddler* (Guslar). Quite different is the gay *Serenade in D minor*, Op. 44, for a small wind ensemble, which aims to revive the spirit of the Mozart serenades and the "Night-music" of all Baroque days.

Of Dvorak's symphonies, only the *New World* is really known to the general public. I would like to point out, however, that the *D major Symphony* is well worth attention, although the influence of Brahms is apparent in it. On the other hand, Wagner's influence, down to the merest details of construction, is clearly felt in the *E flat major Symphony* dating from 1873. In 1874, Dvorak wrote his first *D minor Symphony*. The highly romantic transports of the earlier symphonies are replaced in this work by a classical tendency and style.

* * *

It is difficult within the scope of a relatively short article to give even a cursory and incomplete summary of all the works that well deserve performance and "discovery" in this country. It has frequently been observed that American audiences, once they take a liking to certain pieces, cling to these with tenacity, seldom permitting their substitution by other works of the same composer. It is, of course, quite comprehensible and natural that the *New World Symphony*, that work in which Dvorak transformed into music the very essence of his American experiences, is so popular. On the 27th of September, 1892, Dvorak, invited by Jeannette M. Thurber to become the director of the National Conservatory in

New York, arrived in this country. Every music lover knows something about Dvorak's activities here and is aware of the significance of his coming for the progress of national music. The works written in this country are, strange to say, simultaneously Czech and American, for though they distinctly incorporate the composer's impressions and feelings at the sight of the vastness and loneliness of some American areas, they also contain his yearning for the homeland. The *New World* has rightfully been called the "Symphony of Homesickness". With a background affected by the melodies of the Negro spirituals and of Indian songs, there is a realization of that kinship between American and Czech moods which has helped so much in shaping the good understanding between the two peoples. It is interesting in this relation to note that one of the themes used in the second movement, the "Swing low, sweet chariot", has passed over into Czech folk dances as they are played now.

The *String Quartet*, Op. 96 and *Quintet*, Op. 97, which were composed in Spillville, Iowa, are full of reminiscences of Negro and Indian themes, and the same is true of the *Piano Suite*, Op. 98, which was written in New York. The *Suite* is frequently played in Bohemia in an orchestral arrangement. In it it is hard to tell where the line is to be drawn between American and Czech musical feeling, and the identification seems almost complete.

Though I ought to have mentioned at length Dvorak's dramatic works, *The Jacobin*, *Armida*, *Dimitri*, and his most successful opera, *Rusalka*, his concertos as well as his chamber music, choral and piano works and lieder, I have confined myself to comment on only a few significant works.

In Dvorak we revere and honor the singer of the Czech soul, the Bohemian minstrel with the passionate heart. We love the melancholy of his music legends and the impetuosity of his dance rhythms. Dvorak is really the uncrowned king of Bohemia, and the United States may think back with pride and joy to this "royal" personage, who not only brought his wealth but carried back some of this country's riches.

Some Notes on Dvorak and Recordings of his Music

Peter Hugh Reed

IT might be well, before turning our attention to recordings of Dvorak's works, to consider some of the qualities that have endeared him to English and American listeners. Dr. Nettl gives us a clear picture of what Dvorak means to the Czechs and, at the same time, he has touched upon American opinion. Dvorak was recognized and greatly admired in England and America sooner than in his own country. The decrease in his popularity is not easily explained. Rosa Newmarch says, "It is significant of a curious psychological change in our musical taste to see how Dvorak's radiant confidential star began to wane as Tchaikovsky's meteoric genius came hurtling towards us through an atmosphere that was peculiarly Russian." Curiously today both Tchaikovsky and Dvorak, as well as Schumann, have fallen into disrepute with some, and much of their best music is now neglected. What Mrs. Newmarch says about Dvorak's loss of popularity is equally applicable to the others: "There seems no reason for such a distinct reaction. With every composer, even the greatest, a wholesome and necessary process of elimination is bound to set in after the first indiscriminate acceptance of the public of almost of everything he wrote. Our ways with music are the ways of the satiated owl with a mouse. But they are not so perfectly regulated, being a matter of choice rather than digestion. In modern life there are too many arbiters of the composer's destiny . . ." The case of elimination with Dvorak and the others was not without justification, and no one could wish to see a wholesale revival of his music; discrimination, after all, is essential to maintain an artist's prestige. The lack of discrimination shown in the performance of everything Sibelius ever published, regardless of the quality, is hurting his prestige at this time. There

is always the possibility, however, that the neglect of a large proportion of a composer's works may cause the loss of some wheat with the chaff. If the first and third symphonies of Dvorak, says Mrs. Newmarch, "the Symphonic Variations, the violin concerto, the Moravian duets and the Biblical Songs are too simple and sentimental for the present generation, Heaven help its complexity and dryness of heart!"

It is not too far-fetched to say that "no composer is a more congenial companion than Dvorak" (W. R. Anderson). In a highly complicated world the simple, unfettered soul of Dvorak can be a source not only of great satisfaction but of benefit. His music is invigorating and refreshing. He was an unusually competent craftsman. H. C. Colles, the English writer, contends that Dvorak never outgrew the whistling boy. His spirit was always young; "the morning dew never evaporated under the fierce sun of a strenuous life." The irresistible feeling of elation which the vernal freshness of the countryside awakens in one is in his music. That it was not given to him to be successfully mystical, valiant, or profound should not preclude our enjoyment or appreciation of his art. Perhaps we are just beginning to value the simplicity and naturalness of such art.

The late Philip Hale said of Dvorak that "his music was best when it smacked of the soil. . . One of the happily primitive people, he delighted in rhythm and color . . . Some have been inclined to think lightly of Dvorak because his best and vital qualities were recognized by the people. This popularity irritated those who believed that pure art is only for a few — the purists; they forget Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Verdi, Wagner, Tchaikovsky". Dvorak, he feels might have replied to his detractors by quoting

Walt Whitman's words:

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose? Well, I have — for the Fourth-month showers have and the mica on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish? Does the daylight astonish? Does the early red-tail, twittering through the woods?

It is fitting that we honor Dvorak on the hundredth anniversary of his birth; the artless elation and friendly sentiment of the man and his music offer a helpful tonic in this troubled universe. The Czech people today are living in slavery, but the carefree qualities of Dvorak's art tell us of the old, happy freedom of the Czech soul, which someday again will be liberated.

Dvorak Recordings

Looking over the long list of his works on records, anyone who understands and appreciates the significance of Dvorak's message will find much for which to be thankful. His genius was undoubtedly best exemplified in his orchestral works and chamber music.

Everyone should have several of the *Slavonic Dances* in the record library. They are colorful, rhythmically alive, and full of fine melodies that sprang directly from the soul of the people. All of the sixteen dances, Opp. 46 and 72, have been superbly played by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, under the impeccable direction of the Czech conductor, Vaclav Talich. Make no mistake about the recordings of this organization and conductor; they are among the finest orchestral performances on records. Before Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, this orchestra was one of the greatest in Europe. Its performance of the *New World Symphony* has yet to be eclipsed; it gives us the soundest amalgamation of the American and Czech spirit prevalent in the score.

The dances are available in two albums (Victor sets M-310 and M-345). To those who desire only one set, I recommend album 310; to those who prefer only a small assortment of the dances, I recommend discs 11925 and 11928, containing the first two dances of Opus 46 and the second and fourth of Op. 72.

To all lovers of good music, I recommend investigation of the *D minor Symphony* (No. 2), also performed by Talich and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (Victor set M-663). Although the spirit of Brahms lurks in this dark and powerful score, it is hard to refute its loftiness of spirit and tragic strength. The interested listener should read Tovey on the symphonies (Essays in Musical Analysis—Vol. 2); he gives high ranking to the *D minor*. Then there is the idyllic *Symphony in G major* (No. 4), again consummately performed by the Czech Philharmonic under Talich (Victor set M-304). "This work as a whole seems to rejoice in its existence," says Dr. Hoffmeister, "and its thoughts break into flower . . . as the Czech meadows flower, in luxuriant garlands of varied charm and color . . . this symphony is not profound; it awakens no echo of conflict or passion; it is a simple lyric, singing of the beauty of our country for the heart's consolation; it is a lovable expression of a genius who can rejoice with the idealism of his forbears."

Slavonic Rhapsody No. 3

Those who love the *Slavonic Dances* might do well to investigate Beecham's superb performance of the *Slavonic Rhapsody No. 3* (Columbia set X-55). Tovey, like Dr. Nettl, speaks highly of the *Slavonic Rhapsodies*; he says they show Dvorak's "naive genius in its most amiable light". In these works Dvorak endeavored to deepen and broaden the form of the dances, but although they are well made, not every one will agree with Tovey and Dr. Nettl. *Legend No. 3*, an orchestration of a piano duet — which is coupled with the rhapsody in the recording—is more flowing and the ideas seem to be less constrained.

Unquestionably among the gayest and most colorful pieces that Dvorak wrote is his *Carnaval Overture*. Both Barlow and Fiedler have given us worthy, modern recorded performances of this composition, but the Talich version issued this month (Victor disc 13710) is my favorite.

The *Scherzo capriccioso*, of which Dr. Nettl speaks, is available in a satisfactory recording by the Minneapolis Symphony, under the direction of Eugene Ormandy

(Victor disc 8418). And the *Symphonic Variations* have been available in an English Decca recording by Sir Henry Wood. An early *Serenade in E major* for strings, Op. 22, has also been recorded in England, but it was never released here; it is a graciously lyrical score which I believe would have a wide appeal.

Dvorak's violin and cello concertos are universally conceded worthy of ranking beside his symphonies for their admirable style and adroit workmanship. The cello concerto is one of the foremost in the literature of that instrument. The violin concerto, on the other hand, has far too many more successful rivals, and not every one is in agreement about the success of the composer's efforts here to achieve a combination of the concerto and symphonic styles. The cello concerto is brilliantly and persuasively performed by Casals and the Czech Philharmonic (Victor set M-458), and the violin opus is effectively set forth by Menuhin (Victor set M-387).

The Piano Quintet

Perhaps the most successful of Dvorak's chamber works remains his *Quintet in A major*, Op. 81 (for piano and strings). Here the composer demonstrates his knowledge of instrumental combinations; Dvorak was not only a great orchestrator on a large scale, but knew the potentialities of each instrument in smaller combinations. Not always did he achieve absolute success, but this is also true of other and greater composers than he. It may be said, in passing, that his knowledge of form is often underestimated. The first movement here, as well as in works on a large scale, like the *Second Symphony*, show constructive powers that none but a first-rate musician could attain. And, though Dvorak might not be regarded as a contrapuntalist in the Bachian manner, he nevertheless achieved some ravishing effects by playing one theme against another. The melodic richness of the opening movement of the *A major Quintet* is irresistible. In the elegiac *Dumka*, his expressive powers are at their height; this movement, says Hoffmeister, "seems to sing of the darkened hills and the hope of dawn". The scherzo is a Czech *furiant*, full of high spirits, and the

finale is unfettered and gaily exultant. The Pro Arte Quartet and Artur Schnabel do justice to this music in Victor M-219.

The *Quartet in F major*, Op. 96 (often called the *American* or *Negro Quartet*) is one of the most popular of his works for four stringed instruments. Here, it has been pointed out, the composer travelled far from the classical style and design. Rhythm is its chief element, and its rhythms are more brusque than those that abound in other chamber works. The quartet was inspired by the composer's interest in and study of Negro themes, but its melodies are his own. One could not ask for a finer performance of this work than the Budapest String Quartet has given us in Victor set M-681.

One of my favorite quartets of Dvorak is the charming and naively humorous *E flat Quartet*, Op. 51, which the Leners have set forth delightfully in Columbia set M-369. The lively rhythms and interplay of melodies in the opening movement, and the smiling joyousness of this music carry all before them. The second movement is divided between a lyric *dumka* — the main theme of which owns Russian characteristics — and a *furiant*, somewhat capriciously drawn together. It is the least successful movement. The *Romance* which follows is full of tenderness, a simple and quiet lied for strings. High humor abounds in the finale, which is a skilful treatment of a Czech dance called the *skocna*.

The Last Two Quartets

Dvorak's last two quartets, in *A flat*, Op. 105, and in *G major*, Op. 106, have never been appreciated as fully as they deserve. They were written in his native land after his return from America, and display no American influences. Hoffmeister calls them "revelations of a more settled condition of soul after having seen, experienced and created so much". The *G major*, despite its opus number, was written first. There is a greater breadth and boldness to the writing in its opening movement than in any chamber work Dvorak wrote. I would term the opening movement of the *E flat* one of the most vivacious first movements he ever wrote, the opening of the *G major* the most imposing structurally. The opening allegro

and the adagio, which follows it, have been acclaimed as belonging to the greatest things that ever came from Dvorak's pen. The scherzo and finale have not the strength or amplitude of the previous movements, although they are well written. The gay finale has curious interruptions of a meditative nature. These strange passages in minor suggest, says Ottokar Sourek, the Czech critic, that "the approach of old age cast involuntarily a dark shadow on this utterance of careless joy". The performance of this work by the Prague String Quartet (Victor set M-195) has unfortunately been withdrawn. It is a major loss to the recorded works of Dvorak.

The *A flat Quartet* was the last of Dvorak's chamber works. It is not written on the grand scale of the *G major*, but it ranks with his best chamber music contributions nevertheless. The melodies that make up this work are among his finest, the old gift for singing tunes is still apparent, and their unity has been excellently achieved. The scherzo is one of his most inspired quartet movements, the romantic slow movement is a tender, glowing song, and the finale again an expression of unbuttoned exuberance. The Prague String Quartet does justice to this work in Victor set M-492.

The *Sextet in A major*, Op. 48 was written about the same time as the *Slavonic Dances*, and each theme "pulses with strong Slavonic lifeblood; each thought is colored by national feeling and national ornamentation; each folk mood is of the

simplest and most sincere type; not perhaps very profound, but full of fascinating and fervent lyricism, moving in joyous and fiery rhythms" (Sourek). Although this is an effective work, I am inclined to agree with Hadow that here Dvorak makes us "feel that he is chafing at the restraints of monochrome, that he wants the whole palette, that he is always held in check by the absence of orchestral resources". This work is well performed by the Budapest String Quartet with John Moore and Watson Forbes (Victor set M-661).

As for the *Quintet in E flat*, Op. 97, the interested reader is referred to the review of this issue.

The *Sonatina in G major*, Op. 100, which Ossy Renardy plays in Columbia set M-129, is dedicated to the composer's children; it is slight in substance and style and less rewarding to the listener than to the player.

None of the Moravian duets or the *Biblical Songs* is available on records, and the operatic recordings — once obtainable on import from Czechoslovakia — are unprocurable at this time. Of the many recordings of the familiar lied, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, No. 4 of *Gypsy Songs*, Op. 55, I should be inclined to recommend Maggie Teyte's English record first and the recording of Flagstad second. Povla Frijsh has recently made two other *Gypsy Songs*, Nos. 1 and 7 (Victor disc 2158), which the music lover interested in having examples of the composer's lieder would do well to investigate.

Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941)

▲ Philippe Gaubert, the French conductor, died this past month in Paris. Gaubert, born in 1879 at Cahors, was a pupil of Taffanel at the Paris Conservatory. After winning the Prix de Rome twice and completing his studies in that city, he became well known as a flutist and later as a conductor. In 1919 he was chosen to succeed Messager as the conductor of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, and in 1920 he was given the post of first conductor of the Paris Opéra. Gaubert was an eminent

exponent of Wagner as well as a leading interpreter of his own countrymen's music. He occupies a prominent place among the conductors who contributed outstandingly to the phonograph in the early electrical period. Although a composer of some note, Gaubert was best known and valued as a conductor. An orchestral work, *Les Chants de la Mer*, showing the influence of Debussy and others, is the only work of his made available on records in this country (Columbia set X-109).

Record Notes and Reviews

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

Orchestra

AMERICAN WORKS (for solo wind instruments and orchestra): *Soliloquy* (Rogers); *Rhapsody "The Winter's Past"* (Barlow) (disc 18101); *American Dance* (Phillips); *Serenade* (Keller) (disc 18102); played by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra with soloists, direction of Howard Hanson. Victor set M-802, price \$2.50.

▲ Three of the composers represented here—Bernard Rogers, Wayne Barlow, and Burrill Phillips—are on the faculty of the Eastman School of Music; the fourth, Homer Keller, is a recent graduate from that school. This album is another step, according to its sponsors, in its project for the encouragement, advancement and perpetuation of worthy American music. It is a project which we heartily applaud, even though we are not inclined to view all the material here as equally worthy of perpetuation on records.

The best of the compositions, in our estimation, are those on the first disc—Roger's *Soliloquy*, for flute and string orchestra, and Barlow's *Rhapsody*, for oboe and string orchestra. Phillips' *American Dance*, for bassoon and string orchestra, owns humor and wit and suggests folk derivation or inspiration, but it lacks significance. And Keller's *Serenade*, for clarinet and strings, is conventional and far too reminiscent for its own good. The mood of this latter piece is melancholic, but its plaintiveness lacks depth of feeling. It is, however, like its companion composition by Phillips, a serviceable work for the chosen solo instrument.

Rogers' *Soliloquy* is full of expressive beauty. The theme, stated at first by solo flute, owns a characteristic Indian quality. The construction is simple and compact. Barlow's work suggests loneliness of spirit; the theme has a Russian flavor, but its treatment is completely individual. Both these excellent works belong to that type of American composition wherein the composer employs a minimum amount of thematic material and development.

Mr. Hanson, assisted by four able soloists — Joseph Marriano, flute; Robert Sprenkle, oboe; Vincent Pezzi, bassoon; and Rufus Arey, clarinet — does justice to the inspirations of four of his American contemporaries, and the recording is excellently contrived. —P. H. R.

DVORAK: *Carneval Overture*, Op. 92; played by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Vaclav Talich, Victor disc 13710, price \$1.00.

▲ Of the three modern recordings of this overture I would be inclined to rank Fiedler's version the best all-around recording from the standpoint of reproduction, Barlow's version the next best (although the quality of the woodwind playing in the Andantino section is more atmospheric here), and the present version last. But despite the fact that this recording is not so brilliantly recorded as the Fiedler disc or so sonorously full as the Barlow one, I find the performance of the music truer to Dvorak. Talich alone achieves subtlety of shading and line in the score; the gaiety of the opening is freer and more effervescent. There is some of the spirit of dancing peasantry

here, not of unbridled revelry. The whole middle section is traversed with more feeling, and there is much to be said for Talich's ritard before the English horn begins its plaintive solo. And the recording lacks neither clarity of line nor sonority of tone.

It is hard to resist the gaiety and sentiment of this music. The late Lawrence Gilman reviewing the "Triple Overture" — *Nature*, *Carneval*, and *Othello*—wrote, "if the first part of the overture, *Nature*, suggest Milton's *Il Penseroso*, the second, with its sudden revulsion to wild mirth, cannot but call up the same poet's *L'Allegro*, with its lines to 'Jest and youthful jollity'. The dreamer of the afternoon and evening has returned to scenes of human life and finds himself drawn into

*The busy hum of men . . .
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid,*

dancing in spirited Slavonic measures . . ."

This is music which one does not grow easily tired of hearing. —P. H. R.

BERLIOZ: *Les Francs Juges* — Overture (3 sides), and *Roi Lear*—Overture (3 sides); played by the B. B. C. Symphony Orchestra, direction of Sir Adrian Boult. Victor set M-803, three disc, price \$3.50.

▲ What struck me at the outset was the remarkable insight into and feeling for the style of Berlioz Sir Adrian Boult shows here. Surely these are among the best Berlioz performances on records. The late Sir Hamilton Harty had a way with Berlioz, but he did not fare so well in recording—his performances were made before a wide dynamic range and true tonal nuance were obtainable. But Harty first introduced us to the *King Lear Overture* and developed our appreciation for Berlioz's ability to imply tragic declamation in music. This overture contains some of Berlioz's most effective thematic devices — the recitation utterances of the low strings at the beginning, the melody that follows, and the Italianate theme for the bassoon (midway in side 2), and then there is the other oboe melody which comes earlier on the same record face, which Tovey (*Essays in Musical Analysis*

—Vol. 4) terms a "glorification of the oboe". This overture may not seem of great consequence on a first hearing, and indeed it does not rank among the composer's greatest works, but it nonetheless has its fascination as one becomes familiar with its material and what the composer does with it. As to the programmatic implications of this work, I am in full agreement with the annotator, who says "the drama of any piece of music must, in the last analysis, be sought only in the music and in the instruments of the orchestra producing it." The *King Lear Overture* was written in the composer's twenty-eighth year during a stay in Italy.

The other overture is from *The Judges of the Secret Court*, an opera the composer wrote in his twenty-fourth year and which was never performed and later destroyed. The earliest of Berlioz's orchestral works, it is an immature composition, presenting a conglomeration of ideas which are by no means worked out as successfully as the material is in the *King Lear Overture*. Yet, the orchestral texture shows already Berlioz's ability in this sphere, and there is vitality and originality in the piece. The opening theme is a lovely one, but the material for the brass choir which follows is inflated and pompous; there is a delicious bit of scoring with the return of the opening theme near the end of side one. The *Allegro assai* theme, which is heard at the opening of side 2, recalling the main theme of the *Symphonie Fantastique* (the *idée fixe*), has character, but the fragmentary manner in which the composer uses it later is not conducive to keeping it in mind. Berlioz is said to have had a paternal affection for his first orchestral work, although he humorously admits in his *Memoirs* that the piece might be a headache to others. The playing here does much to make it live for the listener. But it is more the boldness and opulence of the orchestration, rather than the significance of the ideas, that may please the listener.

The annotator does not touch on the program behind this overture, but it may assist some in the enjoyment of the music. In this piece, according to Edward Dannreuther, "by way of working out, an

attempt is made to depict the gradual approach of a band of warriors. Scraps of melody, scraps of accompaniment are heard, the rhythmical beats as from afar, then the fragments coalesce, and the arriving hosts are greeted with a shout of welcome."

Both overtures are splendidly recorded.

—P. H. R.

CESANA: *Negro Heaven*; played by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Fabien Sevitzky. Victor disc 18070, price \$1.00.

▲ This is a colorful piece of symphonic jazz, cleverly scored and full of rhythmic life but thematically lacking in distinction. "The recipe for American music is simple enough," says John Tasker Howard in his book *Our Contemporary Composers*, "if you believe Otto Cesana. Take material such as is used in current popular songs, refine it, and that is your subject matter. Orchestration should be the symphonic type as represented on various outstanding radio hours. The form — Beethoven is O. K. Put it all together, shake well, and you have American music — maybe. Anyway, that's my story!" I would be inclined to say that if that's Mr. Cesana's story, he is stuck with it; for American music of significance is not to be written with a recipe based on trite and insignificant fare. As Howard says, Cesana writes "frankly and perhaps a shade naively." Cesana has done a great deal of orchestrating and arranging for radio, and one finds the ear-marks of his trade in this composition. Here, of course, the composer applied his formula by taking material from Negro spirituals—or rather devising similar material.

As music of entertainment this sort of thing perhaps has its place, and one must admit it is typical of certain idiomatic tendencies in our native music. But this sort of material can be put to more significant use; one is reminded of how much better Dvorak employed similar material in the quicker movements of such works as his *E flat Quintet*, the *American Quartet*, and the *New World Symphony*.

Sevitzky gives this music a zestful, if

somewhat angular performance, and the recording is vital and sonorous.

—P. H. R.

TWO SIXTEENTH CENTURY DUTCH TUNES (arr. for orchestra by Kindler): *Oh, Times of Stress* (*O Ongelukighe Tijd*), and *See How Strong* (*Merck Toch Hoe Sterck*); played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor disc 18071, price \$1.00.

▲ There is strength and nobility in these pieces, and—as the sponsors point out—the sturdy faith and character of the Netherlander can be felt in this moving music. Although we are unfamiliar with the original versions of these tunes, we feel their character and power have been fully sustained by Kindler's rich and sonorous orchestrations. There is much of the loftiness we associate with Bach in the first tune, and one might well believe that such melodies as this inspired him to write some of his own. The second piece, with its swinging dance-like measures, is a perfect foil for the solemnity of the first. Both tunes will stick in your mind after you've heard them, as indeed they've undoubtedly done in the minds of the Dutch for several centuries.

Both the playing here and the recording are excellently contrived.

—P. H. R.

ENESCO: *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* (3 sides); and REZNICEK: *Donna Dianna—Overture* (1 side); played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction Frederick Stock. Columbia set X-203, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Enesco's colorful *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* has long been a popular concert favorite. Based on lively and sparkling Roumanian gypsy tunes, the work is skillfully made and scored and attests to the composer's fine musicianship. Stock gives a good performance of the work, although it is not so finely shaded or so incisively played as the earlier Ormandy one. The Ormandy version, dating from 1935, is an unusually fine recording for its period, and on a machine where the bass can be satisfactorily reduced it still holds its own. The precision of the play-

ing shows that Ormandy had a firmer and surer grip on the orchestral reins than Stock evidences here. The woodwind tone of the Chicago Symphony is darkened more than that of the Minneapolis, and there is admittedly a richer tonal texture here, immediately noticeable in the opening phrases of the recording. But there is also a diffusion of bass, which remains a disturbing element. A more clearly defined texture is found in the Ormandy performance, which is not, however, reproduced quite as vividly as the present one.

A modern recording of the Reznicek overture has long been needed. The Blech version dates back at least a dozen years. Reznicek, although a Viennese by birth, was partly of Bohemian extraction and his comic opera *Donna Dianna* reflected his Bohemian ancestry. Indeed, this gay and effervescent overture is in the spirit of Smetana's overture to *The Bartered Bride*.

—P. H. R.

HANDEL: *Concerti Grossi*—No. 1 in G major (discs 13696/97), No. 5 in D major (discs 13698/99); played by Hermann Diener and his Collegium Musicum. Victor set M-808, price \$4.50.

▲ Handel's *Concerti Grossi*, like Bach's *Brandenburg Concerti*, might well be called the "Good Companions"; for they are full of friendly spirit, as well as stately and patrician thoughts. Romain Rolland's belief that Handel was influenced by his forerunner Corelli's work in this field is understandable. Handel may well have examined Corelli's scores not only at Rome in 1708, but also in England. Corelli was, for a time, a considerable force in England. His reputation was so great in London at one time that he had a shop dedicated to him, where one William Smith sold music at the sign of "Corelli's Head." But this is another story.

Handel, like Corelli, in his *Concerti Grossi* refrained from virtuoso effects that would show off individual players; his writing for the solo instruments employed in these works was undoubtedly intended to exploit their beauty of tone to the best possible advantage. His knowledge of instrumentation was at all times consummate. The clarity, vitality and

spontaneity of the part-writing has always stirred the admiration and respect of musicians and music lovers alike. The fact that he composed a set of twelve *Concerti Grossi* in the short period of three weeks in the fall of 1739 testifies to the fertility of his inspiration. The pattern of these works is, of course, very similar to that of Corelli's — in them a small group of solo instruments, known as the *concertino*, is pitted against a larger body of instruments, the *ripieno*, consisting usually of strings with one or two harpsichords. The harpsichord was regarded as the backbone of the early 18th-century orchestra, and its tone, which blended better with strings than does the modern piano, was used to strengthen the bass line.

Although these works are often played by modern orchestras, there is much to say in defense of their performance by a small chamber orchestra similar to those used in Handel's time. The fluidity of expression, the intimate suavity and tonal purity are better retained by the small orchestra; though they are not entirely lost in the large orchestra, the magnifying glass frequently focuses on the *tutti* to the detriment of the solo instrumental lines. It is not a matter of being a pedant or a purist, but something that will strike any pair of sensitive ears on experiencing the two effects.

All twelve of the *Concerti Grossi* have been recorded by the Boyd Neel String Orchestra for English Decca; only the first six, however, have been re-pressed here. Neel's performances are admirably attained, but the record surfaces—at least of the American issues — are so aggressively gritty that surface noise becomes an unwelcome unit in the musical ensemble. Here, the surfaces are far better. Weingartner has also recorded several of these works, employing a larger orchestra than Neel's or the present. Although Weingartner's versions of the *Fifth* and *Sixth Concertos* offer some fine playing, I believe that most listeners sensitive to the style of these works—their intimate chamber qualities—will find the type of performance recorded here preferable in the long run.

Hermann Diener and his group of

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young players (students at his *Collegium Musicum* in Berlin) do justice to Handel. His performances are more solid than Neel's but not lacking in essential buoyancy. There is more precision in Diener's beat than in Neel's and a broader definition of line. Preference in these matters should remain with the individual listener. Certainly those who like quieter surfaces will find these recordings greatly preferable to the Neel one. From the standpoint of reproduction Diener's efforts have been realistically realized.

—P. H. R.

MCDONALD: *The Legend of the Arkansas Traveller*; and NOVACEK (arr. Stokowski): *Moto Perpetuo*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Leopold Stokowski (solo violin—Alexander Hillsberg). Victor disc 18069, price \$1.00.

▲ Ottokar Novacek's *Perpetuum Mobile*, originally for violin and orchestra, and Harl McDonald's inflation of the familiar *Arkansas Traveller* tune make strange bedfellows. Both serve to exploit Stokowski's fondness for sheer virtuosity. McDonald has an eye for the picturesque and here we find him adroitly mixing it with wit and bold humor. A dark-hued opening, strangely reminiscent of Delius, suddenly gives way to a Stravinskiesque setting of the familiar tune, which is later more individually handled. The effects are cleverly calculated and the whole piece has been so contrived that one feels certain a burst of applause inevitably greets its performance in the concert hall. The work testifies to its composer's uncanny gift for orchestration and arrangement.

Stokowski's transcription of the Novacek piece, which has been recorded in its original version by Menuhin with orchestra on Victor 8383, is an ingenious one for the viola section of the orchestra. There is no denying the effectiveness of the transcription, which tends to make this spontaneous little piece a less individualized expression. Stokowski has his own ideas about the playing of his music, and we suspect also of the McDonald work. Like all the records of the Philadelphia Orchestra, this one is tonally superb.

—P. H. R.

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 3 in E flat (Rhenish)*, Op. 97; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Bruno Walter. Columbia set M-464, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ As in the case of the Tchaikovsky *Fourth Symphony*, I was not able to hear this performance on my own equipment, since Columbia did not get its records in for review in time this past month. Although I heard the work played on a good machine in a fairly large booth, the impression gained was naturally not as satisfactory as would be that given by my own machine. The tone quality is vastly different from that of the Tchaikovsky, and although it is rich and full, it does not have the same brilliance and clarity. The resonance of the place where the recording was made is of a heavier character, and although I was able to clarify the bass line with the controls under hand I was not able to remove the shrillness in the highs without resultant loss.

The sponsors point out that here again, as in the *Eroica*, "the orchestra under Walter's inspired baton outdoes itself in tonal opulence and precision of ensemble." Indeed, it is rather difficult to believe that this is the same orchestra that Barbirolli conducts, so much finer and more sensitive is the playing.

Walter is one of the foremost Schumann interpreters living, as his earlier recording of the *Fourth Symphony* (Columbia set M-106) will bear out. (A re-recording of this work, by Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic, made around 1937, deserves to be issued by Victor.) Walter understands and conveys the German romanticism of this work better than the Italian-French conductor, Coppola. It has always been difficult to understand why the *Rhenish Symphony* was neglected by the recording companies — particularly by the German ones. Although it lacks the buoyancy of the *First Symphony*, the depth of sentiment of the *Fourth*, it is still one of Schumann's most cherishable orchestral works. It was written as a glorification of Rhenish scenes and life. The solemn fourth movement was inspired by the memory of a ceremony at the Cologne Cathedral, where the Archbishop was promoted

to the rank of a Cardinal. Actually the fourth movement remains in performance a solemn introduction to the jubilant finale; and in the spacing of the work here that effect is retained, since the final 16 bars of the movement are on the record face containing the beginning of the finale.

Walter does not take the first movement as fast as Toscanini; he achieves more variety of expression here. The accent is not so unrelentingly on the heroic. Walter gives the scherzo the character of a *Ländler*, or country dance, but without making it, as it is often made in the concert hall, a piece of "clumsy joviality." Indeed, this movement is charmingly set forth. Tovey says that the suggestion of the form of the slow movement comes from the allegretto of Beethoven's *Eighth Symphony* via the andante of Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony*. Its gentle melodies are reminiscent of the composer's songs and piano pieces. Walter's understanding of and sympathy for the singing lines are well evidenced here. As for the masterful fourth movement, of which Clara Schumann said "it is the most artistically made. . . although I cannot follow it so well," here Walter does justice to the solemn thoughts of the composer. The last movement, said to portray a Rhenish festival, also finds in Walter a sympathetic interpreter.

—P. H. R.

STRAUSS, Johann: *Two Overtures and Two Waltzes*; Victor set M-805, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ The overtures are those to *Die Fledermaus* (Bruno Walter and the Paris Conservatory Orchestra) and *Der Zigeunerbaron* (Bruno Walter and the London Philharmonic Orchestra), while the other pieces in the set are the *Emperor Waltz* (Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic) and *Blue Danube* (George Szell and the Vienna Philharmonic). None can be especially recent, and the quality of the recordings, though serviceable, is not of the very highest fidelity. Nevertheless, by virtue of the overtures, the set — or at least the first two discs (13688/9) — is one to be obtained by every lover of finely nuanced and exquisitely phrased orchestral playing. I say the first two discs, for the *Emperor Waltz* is more or less second-

rate Strauss and the *Blue Danube*, besides being played to death, is here presented in a rather routine, metronomic reading, while the overtures are two masterpieces and provide an object lesson in how Strauss waltzes should be played. This is the best *Fledermaus Overture* that I am familiar with. Walter's tempo, a little faster than is customary, provides for a swinging grace that avoids sentimentality. The work emerges with willowy, slender lines, far less pompous and heavy than under the ministrations of certain other conductors. And who else has achieved so perfectly the rubato on the third beat that imparts so deliciously the so-called Viennese lilt? Here is real delicacy and charm. The sentiment of the opening measures of side B is perfectly conveyed, thanks to Walter and the fine wood-wind soloists of the Paris Conservatory Orchestra.

Exactly the same can be said of the performance of the *Zigeunerbaron Overture*, which is scarcely inferior to its companion as a piece of music. Its long introduction, atmospheric and serious, is unusual for Strauss, and not until the end of the first side does the Waltz King don his purple. The melodies here are unequalled in any other works of the composer. Walter supplies a full-blooded, spirited reading when necessary, and is properly smooth and mellifluous in the quieter sections.

Columbia lists both selections under the same conductor's direction, but they date from the early 1930s, and neither as recordings nor as interpretations do they approach the present versions. —H. C. S.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36*; played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia set M-468, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ Looking back at our review of the Tchaikovsky *Fourth*, as played by Koussevitzky (February, 1937), we note that the breaks were unsatisfactory. Here the breaks are again annoying, particularly at the ends of sides 2, 4, and 8. Whether one will become used to them or not is a matter that can only be decided by further association with this recording.

Columbia has long needed a modern recording of this work, since the Mengelberg set, which both Columbia and Decca sponsor, was made by Mengelberg back in 1929 or 1930. The best performance of this symphony on records prior to this has been the Koussevitzky, although the realistic recording seems to have given some persons a little trouble, which of course the two-dimensional dynamics of the Mengelberg did not do. But Tchaikovsky deserves more color and tonal splendor than is to be obtained from the Mengelberg set; its high frequencies cut off about a third lower than in the present set.

Mitropoulos' performance here is one of the best defined readings of this work on records; the superbly disciplined playing, the clarity of line and the fine shaping of the phrases deserve high praise. Perhaps some may think this interpretation too deliberately planned and executed, too taut and lacking in dramatic fervor. Certainly, he does not build for theatrical excitement like Mengelberg, nor does he aim to make the work as heroic as Koussevitzky does, and he certainly avoids the sentimentalism that Stokowski indulges in. There is both dramatic power and intensity to his opening movement, and the *andantino* is given a dignity not often accorded it — here some may miss the yearning Slavic note that Koussevitzky imparts. The melodies are shaped carefully, almost cannily, but with fine musicianship. There is much to admire in the phrasing and the shading of the scherzo, but here, in our estimation, the palm belongs to Koussevitzky. Mitropoulos lets loose more in the finale than in the other three movements, but here too tautness and deliberation are apparent. The attacks at the opening of the finale are not quite as clean as they might be, but otherwise the playing shows that Mitropoulos is one of our foremost orchestral disciplinarians.

It is hardly necessary at this time to discuss the programmatic side of the *Fourth Symphony*; undeniably, it is "a personal document, revealing the man, as his letters revealed him". It is easy, as Philip Hale wrote, "to pick flaws in it . . .

but the music with its deep-rooted melancholy, its noisy attempt to forget the inevitable end, its drunken hilarity, its dark and sinister sadness, is not easy to put aside, not easily to be forgotten". In our opinion, Mitropoulos does not exploit the melancholy side of this work as fully as others do; and for this reason his performance may prove a welcome foil to such readings. It is unlikely that those who cherish the Koussevitzky reading, however, will discard it in favor of the present set; but we would certainly recommend the Mitropoulos as a highly desirable replacement of the pompous and over-stressed reading of Mengelberg.

This recording was heard in a dealer's shop, owing to the fact that Columbia has been tardy with its review material of late. Reproductively the set seemed good as to tone and clarity of line, but not having heard the work on our own equipment, we cannot honestly say whether the new set is better from this standpoint than the Koussevitzky one.

—P. H. R.

WAGNER: *Die Meistersinger—Prelude*; played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, direction Fritz Reiner. Columbia disc 11580, price \$1.00.

▲ There has been much discussion about the pros and cons of spacing this music on two record faces. The generally accepted timing of the work is nine minutes, which is at least a half minute longer than the usually allotted timing for a 12-inch orchestral recording. There have been, however, at least a dozen recordings employing two sides as contrasted with about four using three sides. The best modern version on a single disc is the Beecham one. His performance has been unjustifiably criticized, in my estimation, on this point. Granted, the tempo is faster than that in the three-sided versions, but Beecham's fine musicianship makes his performance wholly persuasive to me. By finer grooving in the present recording, Reiner has been permitted a closer approximation of the accepted timing. But again, there will probably be those who will advance the old argument, claiming that even this is too fast.

This, I believe, is one of the best performances of the prelude on records. The incisiveness and precision of the playing are evidences of Reiner's vivid Wagnerian style. The same conductor's earlier recording of the *Bacchanale* from *Tannhäuser* was by no means as clearly defined as this recording. Interpretatively, his conception of the music is more objective than Beecham's, and not so luscious as the recent Stokowski version on three sides. Reiner seems more concerned with bringing out the inner voices than in displaying the emotional contrasts. Thus, though his reading is a spacious one, it does not have the flow of line which Beecham obtains. Beecham has a broader conception of this music, and, in my estimation, his long flowing lines and better-built climaxes are attributes which make his recording particularly cherishable. But Beecham has not been as brilliantly recorded as Reiner. The second half of the present disc is not only imposing orchestral playing but a vivid reproduction of it, which, however, not all machines may be able to render satisfactorily. There are also swishing sounds in some grooves, noticeable in a high fidelity machine.

Both performances have points of value which will undoubtedly be acclaimed by their separate admirers.

—P. H. R.

SUPPE: *Die Schöne Galathée—Overture*; played by Howard Barlow and the Columbia Broadcasting System. Columbia disc 71191-D, price \$1.00.

▲ This work appears to be more popular in Europe than here. Foreign catalogues list at least seven versions, whereas the only previous American one was a long discontinued Victor. So, to all intents and purposes, this is a first American recording. Why lovers of light orchestral music had to wait so long for this is hard to say; the work is certainly as good as the *Poet and Peasant* or *Light Cavalry*. Which, I admit, may not be saying much; yet I have noticed that esthetes, connoisseurs and good musicians listen to music of this calibre with a sort of good-natured, benevolent superciliousness, and condescend

to enjoy it. And it can be a lot of fun at the right moment. This disc was heard on a small machine in a dealer's booth and while a first impression may be altered when the record is heard to better advantage, the reproduction appeared to be coarse and over resonant, with all the superficial brilliance that over-resonance brings. Barlow gives a spirited reading.

—H. C. S.

Concerto

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37*; played by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted from the keyboard by José Iturbi; and BACH: *Fantasia in C minor*; played by José Iturbi. Victor set M-801, five discs, \$5.50.

▲ The only other set of the Beethoven at present in the catalogues, Victor's M-194—Schnabel and the London Philharmonic under Sargent — was released in 1933 but recorded earlier, having first appeared on an H. M. V. label. Naturally the present set, from the standpoint of reproduction, supersedes it. For an old recording the orchestral values in Schnabel's set are still quite good, but the reproduction of the piano is inadequate, and the left hand scarcely comes through at times. The bass often is muddy, and the high treble has a tendency toward tinniness. This latest essay is not a perfect job — the piano is too prominent, for one thing, and the highs almost approach shrillness — but the recording has sonority, brightness, and a definition in the woodwinds that the older set could not approximate.

I hope that Victor will not pursue the policy of recording Iturbi in a dual capacity. It is true that the results in Mozart's *D minor Concerto* were satisfactory, but here, with a more complex score, there is a suggestion that all is not well. One feels hesitancy in the orchestra; the split-second timing that is necessary for a successful collaboration is missing. Merely play the end of the first

movement for a demonstration of how an orchestra can be the fraction of a second off the beat and ruin a brilliant effect. The same is true in many other places.

Iturbi's keyboard mechanics are smooth, but his interpretation moves me less than Schnabel's does. There are long sections where the pianist-conductor plays glibly, but with little conviction. Too, I find myself disagreeing with many of his accents. In the passage leading to the second theme of the first movement he stresses notes that definitely should be unaccented (Schnabel also has a tendency to do the same), and also throws a false accent (it seems to me) on the mordants that occur shortly after. Beethoven's cadenza is used by both soloists; here Iturbi's rendition has greater bravura and is more smoothly played. Schnabel lacks the technique to cope with the more difficult sections, where his playing becomes stodgy and muddy. An especially rough spot in his set occurs in the octave figure toward the end of side 2. On the other hand, he brings more sentiment and feeling to the slow movement, even though the recording reduces much of side 6 to a mysterious jumble.

The last movement is well done by both artists. Although the last six bars are scored without the piano, Iturbi — as in his performance of the Mozart concerto issued last month — cannot resist coming in on the proceedings with a few lusty chords. For a filler, he plays in an elegant manner one of Bach's finest solo works and one that has long needed a modern recording — the *Fantasia in C minor*.

Neither of the sets is the last word on the concerto. I think that Schnabel's is closer to Beethoven's intentions, but it suffers from inferior recording. Iturbi's performance is smoother and more brilliantly recorded, but seldom gets beneath the surface. A choice between the two will therefore depend upon which factor the buyer believes is of the greatest importance.

—H. C. S.

BERG: *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*; played by Louis Krasner and the Cleveland Orchestra, direction Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M-465, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Schönberg's twelve-tone system has been aptly described as made for the eye and not for the ear. Of all his pupil, Alban Berg alone seems to have attained an impassioned speech, since his powers permitted him to bring to the complex technique, as some have said, a "much needed humanity." His creative genius has been described by one critic as an amalgamation of previous and modern artistic tendencies, which, by virtue of his keen intellect and emotional temperament he was able to weld into a convincing unity. Hugo Leichtentritt, speaking of the twelve-tone scale, says: "As a sound effect, I am inclined to believe that a really well sounding piece of twelve-tone technique is so, not on account of the application of the principle, but in spite of it, owing to the strong musical instinct of the composer, who more or less consciously makes a compromise with the much-abused musical ear and stretches his principles to meet the demands of the ear halfway. This is applicable to Berg's work, for Berg, although completely influenced by Schönberg the theorist, nevertheless brought to his work a greater creative gift and a truer emotional response than his master.

The annotator says that the "effect which this concerto makes on the listener is closely identified with the circumstances attending its composition". This may or may not prove so, since Berg's idiom is not one to which every listener is apt to respond immediately with complete sympathy and understanding. The depth of feeling Berg has attained cannot help but be apparent to the listener, but the formal reasoning of the composer requires familiarity.

It was Louis Krasner, the soloist here, who suggested to Berg that he compose a concerto, and it was Krasner who performed it for the first time at Barcelona in 1936. The death of Manon Gropius, daughter of the widow of Gustav Mahler (a composer for whom Berg had a great

vation), decided the form, for the programmatic connotations play a specific part in the formation of the concerto. The first movement was designed as "a musical vision of the character of the beautiful girl for whom he had felt such a deep affection". The second movement depicts the "agonized suffering of the maiden"; later the music becomes a requiem in which Berg introduces the chorale, *Es ist genug*, from Bach's *Church Cantata No. 20*, the words of which "signalize resignation in the face of death". The full story of the composition of the work and a survey of the music is admirably set forth by Moses Smith, the annotator.

The fact that the concerto is regarded by many as one of the great works in the modern field should convince the listener that it deserves his respect and attention. But it should be borne in mind, that one does not fully penetrate Berg's intentions on a first hearing, even if one is familiar with his idiom.

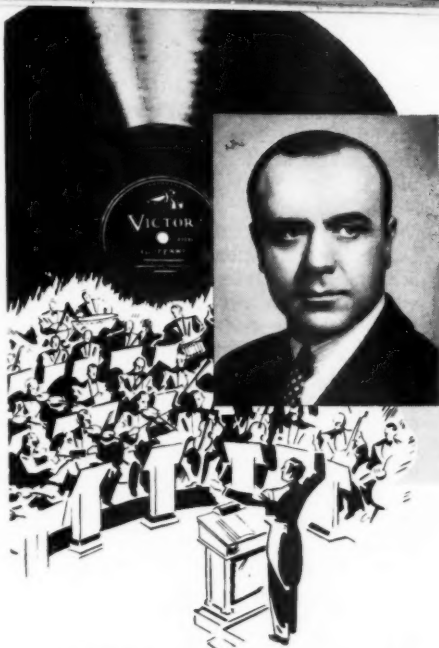
Musicianship and taste are strikingly displayed in this performance. Tonally and stylistically Krasner's interpretation is most impressive, and one feels that the music could not have been more convincingly set forth. High praise also goes to Rodzinski's share in the work. The clarity of line and detail that the conductor achieves is a noteworthy achievement even for that specialist in modern music. The recording is excellent, being quite up to the best standard from this orchestra and conductor.

—P. H. R.

Chamber Music

BACH, Wilhelm Friedemann: *Sonata in C minor*, for viola and harpsichord; played by Yella Pessl and William Primrose. Victor set M-807, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Occasionally a set of old chamber music brings a pleasant surprise. Such a one, for instance, was the Geminiani sonata, released by Columbia about two years ago; another (on a single disc) was Victor's pressing of the Rosenmueller sonata.



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In both cases were discovered works of
surpassing charm. The present composi-
tion is not of that class. It was recently
unearthed by Miss Pessl, who discovered
the manuscript in the Library of Con-
gress. She describes it as a virtual "fan-
tasia concertante," since "much of the mu-
sical material consists of alternating cad-
enzas displaying the virtuosity of both
instruments. . . . The present sonata, though
not specially indicated, can only be played
by the combination of harpsichord and
viola, since there is no other instrument
in the given range, on which the broken
chords and passages of the alto part can
be played."

There are three movements. The first
is an adagio that leads directly into an
allegro. An allegro scherzando closes the
work. None of the three is especially in-
teresting, or in any way superior to most
of the contemporary musical output, al-
though the second movement, which
owes a fine, flowing theme, is somewhat
attractive. Since the work offers ample op-
portunity for technical display, and since
the repertoire of original viola works is
so limited, it may be that the set will find
an audience. Primrose performs superbly,
with magnificent ease and mellow tone,
and Miss Pessl ably backs him up, con-
tributing some exciting playing on her
own account. The recording is good, al-
though the harpsichord could be a little
more prominent: the balance is all in the
viola's favor. Hissing surfaces were evi-
dent on some sides of the review set.

—H. C. S.

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in F major, Op.*
59, No. 1; played by the Coolidge Quar-
tet. Victor set M-804, price \$4.50.

▲ The first of the Rasoumovsky quartets
is undeniably the most broadly conceived
of the three. It opens broadly, with a
long-breathed melody for the cello sus-
tained by the sonorous accompaniment of
the other strings. There is a boldness to
the part-writing and a cumulative strength
and fervor to the whole first movement.
The scherzo suggests a lighter touch but
here the writing often attains expressive

breadth. The slow movement is sublimely beautiful and full of sadness. One should not take too seriously the attributions of its melancholy to Beethoven's reactions to his brother's marriage to a woman of whom the composer did not approve. The vigorous well-being of the finale is a fine foil for the preceding adagio.

In my estimation the *F major Quartet* has never received on records the kind of treatment it deserves. The Roth Quartet performance issued in September, 1936, has been rightfully regarded the best recorded performance. The present set does not supplant it, although technically it offers some better playing. Both Feri Roth, the first violinist of the Roth Quartet, and William Kroll, the first violinist of the Coolidge Quartet, lack emotional sensibility, and both play far too "straight" for the good of the music. Kroll's tone is cooler, and one feels its lacks of warmth and power here in the long climb of the violin at the end of the first movement, in the plaintive phrases of the adagio and in the vigorous lines of the finale.

No one will deny the clarity and cleanliness of the playing here, especially in the lovely adagio, but the failure of the players to plumb the full emotional depths and the want of contrast in the answering voices of the last pages of that movement leaves something to be desired. The Roths get more feeling in this movement, but theirs is hardly a full realization of the emotional possibilities. Temperamentally the Roths seem better suited to the finale and dynamically the Roths offer more than the Coolidges.

Because of the technically proficient performance of the Coolidge group, one can enjoy and appreciate the music. One asset of their set is that it is contained on four discs against the Roth's five. The recording is good, but curiously on a lower volume level than the Roth set. —P. H. R.

CORELLI (arr. Leonard): *La Folia—Variations sérieuses* (3 sides); and BACH: *Bourrée* from *G minor Sonata* (for unaccompanied violin); played by Joseph Szigeti (violin) accompanied by Andor Farkas at the piano. Columbia set X-202, two discs, price \$2.50.

played by Georges Enesco. "The story of the *Folia* is one of the most curious in the history of music," says Percy Scholes. "The name is originally that of a type of Portuguese dance—evidently a wild one. Various melodies used for this dance are extant, but a particular one of these came to have an enormous vogue that endured for at least three and a half centuries." The melody he refers to is the one that Corelli based this work on. By the time the Italian composer used it, the melody ▲ Columbia formerly had a fine performance of this work, the correct title of which is *Sonata No. 12 in D minor, Op. 5* (subtitled *La Folia* or *Folies d'Espagne*), had passed from Spain to France, and possessed all the characteristics of a saraband. It is highly interesting to note the many composers who have made use of this tune; Ponce (in 1500), Vivaldi, Scarlatti, Bach (in his *Peasant Cantata*), Grieg, Cherubini, Liszt (in his *Spanish Rhapsody*), and Rachmaninoff, are among the more important.

I have already spoken about Corelli in the review of the Handel *Concerti Grossi*. His contributions to violin literature have long been admired, and this work is a violin classic. In Corelli's time this sonata was unquestionably performed by solo violin and harpsichord, with a cello or viola da gamba reinforcing the bass. There was a great variety and richness of tone derived in that type of performance. In modern times this sonata is generally heard in Hubert Leonard's arrangement for violin and piano. Undoubtedly, Leonard elaborates the piece somewhat. Scholes points out that most modern arrangements go "far beyond the violin technique of Corelli's time, and exhibit a spirit very foreign to the original."

Szigeti has always been particularly successful in his performances of early violin music. The suavity and finish of his style are well fitted to music of this kind. Here he seems at times a bit heavy handed, but I suspect that this may be because of the fact that the recording—on the machine I heard it—gave me the feeling that the Columbia engineers had not achieved the best balance between the violin and piano. I do not know whether or not the *Bourrée* on the fourth record face comes from the

violinist's earlier recording of this work (Columbia set X-1), but I do know that it is magnificently played. —P. H. R.

DEBUSSY: *Quartet in G minor, Op. 10*; played by the Budapest Quartet. Columbia set M-467, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ The best previous performance of this work on records was that of the Pro Arte Quartet. Theirs was a polished, somewhat detached interpretation — a beautifully cool reading, subtly nuanced but owning; a rather small range of dynamics. The Budapest Quartet bring us a broader, warmer reading of this music — a reading that makes more of the rhapsodic qualities of the first and last movements and the tender and luscious beauty of the slow movement.

The Budapests are far more successful with Debussy than they were with Ravel. But this is understandable, for the Ravel quartet is Gallic to the core, while the Debussy, although owning some Gallic traits, is essentially a more cosmopolitan work. It is very definitely classic in form — the only work of its kind that Debussy wrote. Critics have not been wrong in citing the influences of Franck and Borodin in this music. The first and last movements are not on the same high level of the others; formal writing apparently taxed and hampered Debussy's inspiration. The scherzo is an inimitable serenade, alternating between sparkle and languishment, and the slow movement is richly emotional and its beautifully serene ending is one of the great moments in Debussy.

The best of Debussy's songs and *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* came before the quartet, so that we find his individual harmonic system fully exploited here. The Debussy quartet occupies a special niche in the literature of the string quartet, and its fascination has not dimmed with the years.

The Budapest performance will go a long way towards reviving a flagging interest in this music and in creating new interest. For it is a perfectly balanced and technically finished performance, and certainly it is tonally the richest exposition on records. The tone of the en-

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semble is beautifully reproduced, but on the machine on which we heard this set there was an unfortunate rattle in several spots, especially on the second side of the slow movement. —P. H. R.

DVORAK: *Quintet in E flat, Op. 97*; played by the Prague String Quartet, assisted by Richard Kosderka, 2d viola. Victor set M-811, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Victor issues this set in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth. Dvorak, it seems to me, is one of the most underestimated of musicians. To a large extent he has been overshadowed by his weightier contemporaries, even though he possessed a warmth and spontaneity that none could surpass. Few of his works ever become palling; he is always genial and human, and occupies a place among my records similar to that of Lamb or Chaucer among my books. Like them, he fits every mood. His music is easy to listen to, yet one finds something new and refreshing no matter how often it is played. Perhaps that is because he was not concerned with carrying a "message". Music overburdened with an ideology or overcast with a philosophic aura can be stimulating, but what happens when the bones of the ideology lie bleaching in the sun; when the philosophy becomes so familiar that no more may be obtained from it? I would rather hear the *Slavonic Dances* than *Parsifal*. Dvorak was merely a musician and paid little attention to extra-musical concepts. He was a great orchestrator, a skilled technician, and owned a rich harmonic sense. And he was among the most fertile of melodists; like Schubert and Mozart, he caught the "first fine, careless rapture" that gives to his music the flow and improvisatory quality which are so endearing. His sadness is not the cosmic brooding of the late Beethoven, but is a melancholy of the smiles-through-tears sort, wistfully reminiscent and close to the soil. Simple? Of course it's simple. But there is nothing wrong with simplicity when it is wedded to natural good taste and a healthy emotional outlook.

The present work, composed at about the same time as the *American Quartet*,

might well be called the *American Quintet*. Indeed, it is one of the least Bohemian of Dvorak's works, and only in isolated sections, such as the first theme of the last movement, does the Czech flavor fully manifest itself. Though not one of the composer's greatest works, it is, like nearly all of his chamber music, very pleasant to listen to, and contains some haunting passages. Composed in America at a time when there was much experimentation with Negro and Indian melodies, this *Quintet* makes use of native thematic material, which may account for certain points of resemblance to the *American Quartet*. The first theme of the second movement is obviously Indian, and a section of the first movement is almost a Southern buck-and-wing. But underneath is Dvorak the Bohemian, and at the very basis is Dvorak the musician; and the treatment and part-writing recall the earlier quartets (the last movement suggests the finale of the *Quartet in E flat*). It is necessary to realize that the nationalism of Dvorak, whether it be American or that of his own country, is always controlled by the laws of musical composition. Minor nationalists like Grieg or Ljadoff, it has been pointed out here many times, are not among the greatest composers because, with but few exceptions, they lacked the technique or imagination to transform their nationalism into something universal. In Dvorak's own words, "I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of the Indian [substitute Bohemian or Negro] music, and, using these themes as subjects, have developed them with all the resources of modern rhythm, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestral color." (Italics mine.)

Known as specialists in Bohemian music, the Prague Quartet and their collaborator present a sympathetic and well balanced interpretation. Their attack and balance are not always of the best, and the inner voices do not always emerge clearly, but their feeling and insight are authentic. The balance tends to favor the soprano instruments; thus the prevailing tone is less warm than it might be. The recording is admirable.

—H. C. S.

The American Music Lover

Keyboard

BACH: *Italian Concerto*; played by Artur Schnabel, piano. Victor set M-806, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ The piano versus harpsichord problem arises here, for a comparison between the present version and Landowska's is inevitable. There was a time when this reviewer was an uncompromising purist: Bach wrote his keyboard works for the harpsichord or clavichord, therefore let them be played as written, anything else being sacrilege, desecration, etc. It was not until recently that he caught himself admitting that he enjoyed those works just as much played on the piano, and that all these instruments have their points.

The harpsichord is best suited for fast movements, and Landowska's performance of the first and last movements of the *Italian Concerto* is perfectly satisfying artistically. As has been pointed out many times, the modern harpsichord, in the hands of a skilled performer, is capable of infinite gradations of tonal color. But not even Landowska can give me what Schnabel does in the slow movement; the piano is more suited to expressions of a personal nature, and this movement is one of the most personal that Bach ever composed.

Schnabel, like Landowska, obviously has an insight into the music, but his pianism is not flexible enough for the fast sections. There he is heavy, and his left hand does not seem to be able to manage the scale passages with the requisite clari-



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that in his solo composition he was trying to achieve effects of balance and color similar to those in orchestral works of the Italian school. —H. C. S.

CHOPIN: *Rondo in C, Op. 73* (for two pianos); played by Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson, duo-pianists. Columbia disc 71190-D, price \$1.00.

▲ The only other version, played by Karl Ulrich Schnabel and Leonard Shure, dates from 1934; thus a replacement is in order. This *Rondo* is a spirited little work with a melancholy middle section that is Polish in spirit. Although possessing a high opus number it was composed in 1828, not being published until after Chopin's death. The composer wrote that it originally was intended for one piano; it would have made an effective piece, but the added instrument allows for more embroidery. It is interesting to note that even in so early a work Chopin's individuality was as pronounced as it was when he composed his greatest works. Naturally the melodic material is slighter, and the intensity that later was his is missing, but he keeps things going, and there is never a dull moment. Huneker writes that no traces of the poetical Chopin are present. Too, the pedalling is sometimes muddy. The slow movement, however, is masterfully played, and can rank as one of Schnabel's finest performances. Here the Victor engineers have done notable work in their preservation of that rarest feature in piano discs—a real pianissimo. Such delicate dynamics as those occurring at the end of side 3 have seldom been heard on records.

For those who are not familiar with the work and might wonder why no orchestra is present, it may be well to state that the term "concerto" was a loose one in Bach's day, as was most musical nomenclature. Parry suggests that the work may have been conceived as an experiment in the transfer of the orchestral form to a solo instrument. That is, the changes from one manual to the other, from *piano* to *forte*, would represent the alternation of solo instrument(s) and orchestra. Thus Bach's title — *Concerto, after the Italian Manner* — would signify

Surely he forgets the middle section.

Bartlett and Robertson play with finesse and spirit. They are in perfect unison, and are clean and precise. I would have liked more color, and I think that they could have pedalled to better advantage (clarity is not always the desideratum in Chopin, and may lead to sparkle without body), but there is no denying the aristocratic grace they impart. The recording appears to be good, but I must defer judgement until I hear the disc on my own machine.

—H. C. S.

MOZART: *Sonata No. 4 in F, K. 497* (for four hands); played by Jesús María Sanromá and Mercedes Pasarell Sanromá. Victor set M-809, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Very little four-hand piano music has found its way into the recorded repertoire. Offhand, I remember only the Hindemith sonata, though undoubtedly there are others. Of course, there is an obvious reason for the deficiency: not many composers have bothered to write in that form. Which is a fact to be regretted, for there are few musical pleasures equal to that of sitting at the keyboard with an equally inept partner and trying to sight-read new compositions. Not every person can afford to have two pianos in his house, and few are skilled or enterprising enough to gather an amateur string quartet, but almost every music lover who plays the piano, no matter how poorly, has at one time or another done four-hand work. The requisites are a congenial partner, an ability to laugh off mistakes, an ear hardened to the most horrible dissonances (which inevitably occur after about the fifth measure, when Primo is two beats ahead of Secondo), and a smug impression that after all the results aren't so bad. What if arms become entangled, the dog begins to yow! in sympathy, fortes crash through the house, and the neighbors stalk off to the landlord? Music is being made.

Unfortunately for devotees of four-hand playing, little that is original exists for their chosen means of expression. There are all sorts of transcriptions of orchestral and chamber music; Schubert wrote some four-hand works, as did,

among the moderns, Stravinsky and Górowsky. Dvorák, Grieg and others also composed in that medium, but there is not much of value. I was unaware of the Mozart sonatas, and am thankful for this specimen and the chance to investigate the others (seven more are found in the Koehel catalogue). If this work is typical, it will be a pleasant task. Tovey perhaps has a more exalted opinion of this *Sonata in F* than the music warrants, but there is no denying its uninterrupted melody, glossv craftsmanship, and interesting writing for the performers. The slow introduction, an adagio, is powerful and moody; that and the development section of the first movement are strongly suggestive of Beethoven. In the andante is a singing theme that one could easily imagine being a piano condensation of one of Mozart's operatic arias. Another Beethovenesque passage crops up in the finale (near the beginning of the last side); otherwise all is bright and gay.

The Sanromás (husband and wife) play

with force rather than delicacy. A clean-cut attack features the performances, but the heavy and overpercussive treatment hinders a full realization of the composer's intentions.

—H. C. S.

SCRIABIN: *Preludes, Etudes*, etc.; played by Samuel Yaffe, piano. Paraclete Music Discs (10-inch) 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7; price \$1.00 each.

▲ Last month Paraclete Music Discs released the first two in a series of works by Scriabin—a group of preludes and an étude. The contents of the present five discs are: *Danse languide, Op. 51; Poèmes, Op. 32, Nos. 1 and 2; Poème Ailé, Op. 51; Vers la flamme, Op. 72; Preludes, Op. 11, Nos. 11 and 18; Op. 15, No. 2; Op. 22, No. 4; Op. 31, No. 1; and Op. 74, No. 3; Etudes, Op. 8, Nos. 1 and 11; Guirlandes, Op. 73, No. 1; and Poème Satanique, Op. 36*. Although poorly recorded and possessing much surface noise, they deserve attention because they form the

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—H. C. S.

Voice

BIZET: *Carmen*—*Habanera*; and THOMAS: *Mignon*—*Connais tu le pays?*; sung by Risé Stevens (mezzo soprano) with orchestra conducted by Frieder Weissmann. Columbia disc 71192, price \$1.00.

▲ I would cite this as one of the most auspicious record debuts of an American artist. Miss Stevens is a singularly gifted singer; her voice owns warmth and beauty, and here she displays the fine musicianship that she has evidenced on the operatic stage. It is the sheer beauty of the singing in the *Habanera* that makes it so enjoyable. Her conception of the wayward gypsy is subtle and somewhat refined, but she knows the power of words and her projection of the text is tellingly set forth. One could not tell if the singer would be successful in her portrayal of this role on the stage, but there is a suggestion here that she might bring a highly interesting characterization to the part.

Mr. Miller, in reviewing Wolf's *Mignon*, a setting of Goethe's poem which Thomas used in a French translation as the chief aria in his opera *Mignon*, remarked on the fact that Schumann once said that "the effect of Goethe's poem itself, without music, is more powerful than most of its settings." Whereas Wolf was inspired to "overemphasis, and excess of feverishness" in his setting of this text, Thomas sentimentalized a French version that had lost much of its flavor in the translation. Miss Stevens sings this aria, however, with persuasive artistry; its nostalgic note, although it is conveyed, is not overstressed.

The accompanying orchestra, although satisfactory, is not particularly refined. The conductor's inclusion of the opening measures which precede Carmen's recitative, which is not sung here, was ill-advised, as it provides a disturbing element to one who knows the score. The recording is good.

—P. H. R.

DI CHIARA: *La Spagnola*; and YRA-DIER: *La Paloma*; sung by Beniamino Gigli with orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc 2129, price 75c.

▲ Gigli is in rare form in the popular Neapolitan song *The Spanish Girl*. He sings this ditty with the right bravura and impishness calculated to make a girl of Naples jealous. The Neapolitan inevitably sings this song with mock abandon and a twinkle in his eye; after all, the assertion of the song that the Spanish girl is a "queen of love" and she alone is beautiful is hardly flattering to a jealous, black-eyed girl of Naples. It's all in fun, and that's the spirit that Gigli conveys.

There is little to say about the familiar Spanish song about the dove. The tenor is inclined to emphasize its sentiment, but then that is the traditional manner in which the song has always been sung by the people. And Gigli in these two songs has wisely divorced himself from his operatic style. The recording is excellent.

—P. H. R.

HANDY (arr. Hall Johnson): *St. Louis Blues*; and SPIRITUAL (arr. Johnson): *Go Down Moses*; sung by Hall Johnson Choir. Victor 10-inch disc 4553, price 75c.

▲ Hall Johnson's transcription of W. C. Handy's American classic *St. Louis Blues* is the least effective of the ten versions Victor has in its catalogue. It will be admitted that a piece of this kind can stand all sorts of arrangements, but the present one surely proves that the piece does not need "effects." The Hall Johnson arrangement of *Go Down Moses* is more consistent, but the solo bass singer has too much of a wobble to make this performance an enduring one. There are a lot of fine recordings by this famous Negro chorus, but these, in our estimation, can not be included among its best.

—P. G.

LEHAR: *Eva* — *Melodrama and Aria* (in English); and (a) WEINGARTNER: *Liebesfeier*; (b) VAN DER STUCKEN: *O komm mit mir in die Frühlingsnacht* (in German); sung by Irene Jess-

ner with Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bruno Reibold. Victor disc 18072, price \$1.00.

▲ Mr. Miller's recent observation that Miss Jessner is not an especially glamorous singer although she is a dependable one is borne out here. She does her best and most convincing singing in the light-opera scene and aria. Although the soprano uses an English translation and her enunciation is on the whole good, she does not succeed in making all her words understood. But there the text of the song does not seem of great importance. Rather it is the music that counts, and since it is one of Lehar's most gracious musical effusions, one can sit back and enjoy the singer's easily floated tones.

Neither the Weingartner song nor the Van der Stucken is a great lied; and both, in our estimation, are better suited to a man's voice. The Weingartner, however, can be made more effective than Miss Jessner makes it here. Anyone who has heard the Schlusnus recording of this song will recall the breadth of line he obtains by adopting a slightly slower tempo, and the more imposing climax. Both of these selections are spring songs typical of the Teutonic romanticism current at the turn of the century. The Van der Stucken was a popular encore piece with a number of prominent singers back in the first decade of this century. Mera Seimeyer once made a beautifully toned recording of *Liebesfeier* for Parlophone; and both Volker and Schlusnus have made more desirable recordings of it than the present one, for Polydor. Ellison Van Hoose, the American tenor made a record of the Van der Stucken song in 1906 which is still prized by collectors.

The recording of the singer's voice is realistic, but the orchestral accompaniments are not very distinguished.—P. G.

LISZT-SCHIPA: *Liebestraum* No. 3 (sung in Italian); and SCHIPA: *Ave Maria* No. 2; sung by Tito Schipa with piano and with organ and bells respectively. Victor disc 18068, price \$1.00.

▲ All the old artistry, the fine diction and phrasing, are evidenced here, but the youthful beauty and roundness of tone is

gone. This was noticed last winter when we heard this singer at the Metropolitan Opera and in concert. Unfortunately his voice does not possess enough volume to fill a large auditorium satisfactorily. On records he succeeds better, but even here those who are familiar with his earlier recordings are bound to notice the change that time and age have made. Schipa's earlier recording (Victor disc 6543) of the arrangement he made popular of Liszt's ubiquitous *Love Dream* is more



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resonant and fuller in tone, although not one mite more artistically sung than it is here. The *Ave Maria* is an effective setting of the prayer to the Virgin, and he sings it with appropriately devotional feeling. The recording is good but the surfaces of the review copy are not as smooth as they might be.

—P. G.

LEHAR: *Yours Is My Heart Alone*; and SANDERSON: *Until*; sung by Robert Weede (baritone) with Pablo Miquel at the piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 17282-D, price 75c.

▲ This young American baritone has a fine resonant voice which he uses with admirable manly artistry. He assuredly deserved a more auspicious debut on records than is accorded him here, but in the light of his singing of the two somewhat hackneyed selections above we can look forward with pleasure to any operatic recordings he may care to give us. The recording here does justice to the singer and his accompanist.

—P. G.

ROSSINI: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*—*A un dottor della mia sorte*; and MOZART: *Nozze di Figaro*—*La Vendetta*; sung by Salvatore Baccaloni (basso-buffo) with orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Columbia disc 71193, price \$1.00

▲ This disc is highly interesting because of the difference in treatment that Rossini and Mozart bring to the same character. For Dr. Bartolo, who sings these arias in both operas, is one and the same character. Usually the basso who portrays the role of Bartolo in the *Barber of Seville* sings Pietro Romani's air *Man: un foglio* in place of the present solo. I do not know how and when this substitution was made, but I am in agreement with those who believe that the latter aria is a better one than the original which Baccaloni does here. Usually when the Rossini aria is done it is considerably cut, as it is in the present instance. That crusty old guardian of Rosina, Dr. Bartolo, has just questioned her on why Figaro came to visit them. Snooping around, he discovers five sheets of note paper where there had been six. Rosina says she wrapped sweetmeats in it; and further tells him

that the pen is wet because she drew flowers with it on her embroidery. His suspicions are aroused and he voices them in this aria: "To a doctor of my importance you dare to offer such excuses . . . my daughter, these pretexts are nonsense, not a word can be believed." He tells her he distrusts her and is going to put her behind lock and key: ". . . try Rosina at your leisure, lamentations, desperation; I will resort to incarceration, and this day it will begin."

In the *La Vendetta* aria from the *Marriage of Figaro*, the scheming, wily old Bartolo is bent on vengeance against Figaro. "Revenge is a pleasure reserved for the wise," he sings. ". . . it's a difficult business but it will be successful, even if the whole legal code has to be turned over . . . that ruffian Figaro shall be defeated."

Baccaloni has proved singularly successful in his portrayal of these two parts on the operatic stage, and here his gifts for characterization are fully projected. Vocally he is more impressive than he was in his first Columbia recording, but one feels that the best balance between voice and orchestra has not been obtained. The orchestral playing is not very good. A comparison with the *La Vendetta* aria recording in the Glyndebourne Opera set reveals the sad lack of finesse in the present disc. On the other hand, it must be noted that Baccaloni gives a far more effective account of the music than does Norman Alin, the singer in the opera set.

—P. H. R.

SCHUBERT: *Seven Songs* from *Die Winterreise*; sung by Lotte Lehmann with Paul Ulanowsky at the piano. Columbia set M-466, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Lotte Lehmann previously gave us eleven of the twenty-four songs that make up Schubert's song cycle, *Die Winterreise*, in Victor set M-692 (see issue of Sept. 1940 for review). Here the soprano adds seven others, and the sponsors of the records intimate that the singer will later complete the cycle.

Since this set arrived in the office on the day we were going to press, it was not possible to review it. It will be re-

viewed next month by Mr. Miller, who will then be back from his vacation.

—P. G.

SMOKY MOUNTAIN BALLADS, Edited by John A. Lomax; performed by musicians of the locality. Victor set P-79, five 10-inch discs, price \$3.00.

▲ John and Alan Lomax, father and son, have collected and written about folk songs of this country for many years. Both are authorities in the field, and Alan is at the present time head of the Folk Music Section of the Library of Congress in Washington. John Lomax, in his notes, tells us that he has hunted American folk songs "in their native lairs among the swamps of the South and far back in the mountain at the 'head of the hollers' or over 'beyant that little hill', I have journeyed 300,000 miles and more."

It has been observed that radio in recent years has done more to make the folk songs of this nation known than have the record companies. The Lomaxes have been heard on the radio and both have done a great deal to further the interest in genuine American folk material and its authentic performance. It is fitting that some of their work comes to records. Victor has gradually in the past year been putting forward various albums of folk material, and none we feel has been more interesting than this one.

Most of the performers of this music, from the middle South, are undoubtedly what urban dwellers would regard as "hill-billy" players; the material they use here, if individual, is nonetheless steeped in folklore. This is not the sort of material that one can easily sort out and grade: each listener will have his favorites. I agree with Lomax when he says that the music brings "something of the same buoyancy, the same sense of freedom and abounding life as I have felt among their native mountains. The mountaneers' songs run the gamut of all human emotions, but they touch the chord lightly . . . Sprung from their own native soil [the mountain singers'] songs reflect a naive independence of conception and expression, a buoyant gaiety that seem a part of the environment of freedom—far removed from the sordid ills of the crowd."

Mr. Lomax's notes have the flavor of similar material done by Carl Sandburg; they are delightfully written. He explains the origin of each song, and tells us about the musicians who perform it.

The contents of this album are: *Riding on that Train Forty-Five*; *Darling Corey*; *The East Virginia Blues*; *Cumberland Mountain Deer Race*; *The Intoxicated Rat*; *Chittlin' Cookin' Time in Cheatham County*; *On a Cold Winter Night*; *Ida Red*; *Worried Man Blues*; and *Down in the Willow*.

This is a worthy collection of Americana.

All the tunes are sung by one or more voices with accompaniments of one or

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—P. H. R.

VERDI: *Otello*—*Cassio's Dream*; sung by Victor Maurel; and *Otello* — *Ora e per sempre addio*; sung by Francesco Tamagno. I. R. C. C. 10-inch disc 193, price \$2.00.

▲ This International Record Collectors' Club release, of which we spoke the month before last, arrived too late last month to be reviewed. Our first impression of the Maurel record was a somewhat disappointing one, but subsequent hearings convinced us of the value of this release. Here, on one record, I. R. C. C. has drawn together recordings by the creators of two leading roles of *Otello*. Contemporary criticism spoke most highly of Maurel's Iago. The première of the opera took place at La Scala, Milan, in 1887. Maurel is said to have made his recording in 1905; he was at the time in his fifty-seventh year. Tamagno was around fifty-four when he made his recording of *Ora e per sempre addio*. Thus, it will be noted, neither singer was in his prime. Maurel's voice was dark-hued and somewhat lugubrious in quality when he came to make this recording, and we can well believe the horn was not too kind to him. But his artistic conception of this aria is conveyed, and we can acquire some idea of the way he interpreted the character. The Tamagno selection is not one of his most successful recordings—there is more than one place in which the tenor's tones ride below pitch—but it too gives us an idea of what this singer's interpretation must have been in its prime. There are curious tales told about Tamagno's *Otello*; the De Reszke fans spread it around that he never sang pianissimo and that he lacked feeling and always sang off pitch. But two old timers who heard him sing the role in the 1890s have assured me that he sang with feeling and warmth in the *Love Duet*, and that at the performances they attended he was always on pitch.

It is but fair to point out that the best *Cassio's Dream* ever made on records was the Fonotipia recording by Mario Sammarco; and the best *Ora e per sempre*

addio is the Victor recording (87071) made by Enrico Caruso. Caruso never sang the part of *Othello* in opera, but he did record this particular aria and the blood-thirsty duet *Si, per ciel* (Victor 8045) with Ruffo.

—P. H. R.

Verse

ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH VERSE:

Poems from Lyly to Sandburg; read by Cornelia Otis Skinner. Victor set M-810, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ We have here recitations of twenty-five poems by twenty-one poets, the selections ranged in chronological order. First a dip into three Elizabethans—Drayton, Lyly and (as F. P. A. would put it) W. Shakespeare—; then poems by Milton, Suckling, Addison, and Blake. The romantics are represented by Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron and Keats. Browning and Tennyson are the Victorian offerings, together with Mrs. Browning, Patmore, and Christina Rossetti; while Masfield, Brooke, Frost, Millay and Sandburg are the selected moderns. All of the poems are very familiar, being the most representative examples of the poets' work.

I confess to being less than enthusiastic about the work of Miss Skinner here. For one thing, she reads a little too fast, thereby missing some of the flavor of the verbal music, and in some places she reads with too much "expression" for my taste. The latter may be a personal reaction; more important is the fact that many of the selections should have been recited by a man. An instance is Lyly's *Cupid and My Campaspe* (incidentally, I think that the annotator, Sidney Thomas, is unkind in his views of this perfect little lyric), where Miss Skinner is unpardonably coy. Other examples of unfortunate choice are the Drayton and Shakespeare sonnets, Milton's sonnet on his blindness, Suckling's *Why So Pale and Wan?*, and Byron's *So We'll Go No More A-Roving*. Byron wrote the latter in Italy, in a despondent mood while speculating upon his wasted years. It is one of the most intense of his lyrics, and most unfortunately Miss Skinner adopts a shrug-of-the-shoulder

flippancy which would be wonderful for many a Restoration poem but which is out of place here. She seems to have much more feeling for the messages of the poems in the modern group, for the recitations there carry infinitely more conviction than those in the first three groups.

When all is said and done, an album like this will be valuable in at least two respects: it will serve to rekindle the memories of those who have not read a poem since their school days, and perhaps provide the impetus for a fresh start; and it will be of use in the classroom, to provide a prop for Johnny's and Betty's introduction to poetry. The connoisseur of poetry, however, will not find much here. Which leads me to a suggestion. The Elizabethan lutenists and madrigalists composed much charming music for lyrics by anonymous authors — lyrics that are among the most beautiful in all literature. They have been compiled by E. H. Fellowes (*English Madrigal Verse*); others can be found in the Bullen collections. Many are unknown even to specialists in English literature, but some are so extraordinary that they must have been written by great figures. A selection could be made from these; and instead of music selected at random to bridge the gap between the selections, as in the Skinner album, the original music which was composed for the lyric could softly be played as a background to the reciter. Thus we would have great poetry and lovely music that would both be making their first appearance on records. Most of the songs are strophic, so that a lutenist could play the music of the first verse and then sink to a pianissimo, letting the reader carry on. The poetry in the song books of Dowland, Jones, Attey and several others are rich in material for a project of this sort.

—H. C. S.

Guitar

GIULIANI: *Grande Overture*, Op. 61; played by Julio Martinez Oyanguren (guitar). Victor disc 13673, price \$1.00.

▲ Oyanguren brings us another large-scale composition for the guitar (he previously recorded for Columbia the *Grand Sonate* by Sor.) This is one of the most

imposing compositions of its kind that we have ever heard even though the thematic material lacks true distinction, and its execution by the South American guitarist would seem to be among the best things he has accomplished for the phonograph. The piece, which follows the form of the concert overture, is ambitiously worked out and exploits the technique of the player as well as the sonority of the instrument. One might say the composer has aimed to create orchestral effects for the guitar. The clever interplay of bass and treble strings requires nimble fingers and sound technique, both of which Oyan-

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guren assuredly seems to have. The difficulty of keeping the guitar perfectly in tune in a work of this length is generally one of the drawbacks hindering successful performance. It must be said that the player has succeeded more admirably in sustaining the pitch here than he did in the Sor or some of the other long works he recorded for Columbia. The recording is realistic and without tonal exaggeration. —P. G.

Overtones

WE have been given to understand that Mr. Stokowski's recent recording session — in which he is credited with having made 100 records in ten days — was somewhat different from the usual recording date. We are told that he recorded all the material on films, which he intends to play back onto discs and with the help of controls manipulate the dynamics to suit his wishes.

Columbia announces an exclusive contract with Adolf Busch, violinist, and Rudolf Serkin, pianist. This will also bring the Busch Quartet under the Columbia label, since Adolf Busch is the leader of the organization. Another artist to join the Columbia roster is Paul Robeson, the Negro bass-baritone.

* * *

In the August issue of that worthy publication, *The Gramophone*, its editor, Compton Mackenzie, writes: "When I hear a piece of chamber music by Dvorak for the first time I always wonder why it is not familiar, so lyrical are the melodies, and so quick a sense of intimacy does the work impart." Alec Robertson's review, in the same issue, of the English Decca recordings of Dvorak's piano quartets Opp. 23 and 87, whets our appetite for these works. Both works, he tells us, are well played by the Silverman Piano Quartet. The numbers of the discs are, for those who may be interested in importing these sets, K967/970, *Quartet in D*, Op. 23, and K971/974, *Quartet in E flat*, Op. 87.

English releases in the past month are dominated again by American recordings. Kindler's recording of Tchaikovsky's *Third Symphony* heads the H. M. V. list. Below are a few new items recently issued:

BACH: *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*; and HANDEL: *Praise Ye the Lord from Cantata con Stromenti*; John McCormack. H. M. V. DA1786.

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR: *She Rested by the Broken Brook*; and HUGHES: *Down by the Sally Gardens*; John McCormack. H. M. V. DA1778.

BRAHMS: *Capriccio in B minor*, Op. 76, No. 2; and *Intermezzo in A flat*, Op. 76, No. 3; Myra Hess. H. M. V. B9189.

DVORAK: *Trio in E minor, "Dumky"*, Op. 90; Louis Kentner (piano), Henry Holst (violin), and Anthony Pini (cello). Columbia DX1017/20.

HANDEL: *Art Thou Troubled from Rodelinda*; and BACH: *My Heart Ever Faithful from Cantata No. 68*. Isobel Baillie with City of Birmingham Orch. H. M. V. DX1022.

FOLK SONGS: *I Know My Love and The Verdant Brays of Skreen*; Barbara Mullen. H. M. V. B9187.

RCA-Victor's Newest Machine

At the Music Trades Show in New York during the latter part of July, RCA Victor introduced its latest automatic device, which plays both sides of a record in immediate succession. The new mechanism, shaped like a tuning fork, is really a combination of two separate tone-arms and pickups. In operation the tone-arm first lowers to play the top side of a record, then swings back to permit the turntable to reverse action so that the underside of the record may be played by the under part of the tone-arm, which swings upward. When both sides of the disc have been played, it is deposited into a felt-lined compartment and another record drops gently into place. The

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changer mechanism accomodates 15 records in all, and automatically shuts off the motor at the end.

Adopting a new light-weight pickup employing a sapphire needle, this new machine does away with the necessity of changing needles. The danger of chipping the sapphire needle is relatively small as long as the mechanism works perfectly, for there is practically no drop of the pickup to speak of, and moreover the unit weighs less than an ounce. In the preliminary tests we saw at the music show, and later in a private demonstration, we were impressed with the operation of the mechanism and the fact that it seemed to wear records less than any other changer now on the market. The whole new mechanism is inclosed in a cartridge, which, in case of trouble, can be pulled apart from the arm and be replaced by a new cartridge.

This invention is the work of B. R. Carson, an RCA Victor design engineer, who smilingly tells you it will do everything to make life easy for a music lover, except to brush the dinner crumbs from his vest. Mr. Carson claims he got his idea when he riding on a train one day, when the car he was in was stopped and backed up to be hitched to another train. Mr. Carson worked on the invention for several years before perfecting it. An other feature of this new unit is a Flexible Tone Bridge, a tiny wire filament which eliminates all objectionable needle noise at the source, and a "Roll-Out" automatic record-changer, permitting the entire mechanism to roll out of the machine so that records may be placed on it with the maximum convenience without opening the top of the cabinet.

The tone of the machine is consistent with the type of quality RCA Victor has put out in its best machines in recent years, the emphasis being on a rich, resonant sonority rather than on a tonal quality that aims to reproduce the widest possible range. There is no question that the machine has been developed to please the taste of the greatest number of listeners, and we have every reason to believe that those who prefer this type of reproduction will find it one of the most satisfactory instruments of its kind now on the market.

September, 1941

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 1)

rewarding in the long run), and some other composer's work in place of the Grieg composition. But these matters need not detain us here. Rather let us examine the recordings recommended by the author of the piece, George Marek.

The recordings given are in the case of the Mozart a choice between the Koussevitzky or the Toscanini sets; the Bruno Walter recording of the *Leonore Overture*; the Koussevitzky performance of the Schubert symphony; the Stokowski performance of the *Tannhäuser* music; Stock's antiquated version of the *Meistersinger Prelude*; the outdated recording of the Tchaikovsky *Patriotic* by Koussevitzky; the Czech Philharmonic performance of the Dvorak *Fourth*; Stokowski's early recording of the Bizet music; Fiedler's version of the *Roman Carnival Overture*; and the Goossens-London Philharmonic version of the Grieg.

My correspondents believe, and rightly too, that Beecham's recordings of the Mozart symphony, the *Meistersinger Prelude*, the Bizet *L'Arlésienne Suite*, the Berlioz overture, and the Grieg *Peer Gynt Suite* should have been recommended. The consensus of the best critical opinion that has been published in this country and England would rank highest the Toscanini and Beecham performances of the *G minor Symphony*; the Koussevitzky version is marred by a distortion of the composer's intentions, particularly in the opening movement. The same opinion has placed Sir Thomas' performance of the *Meistersinger Prelude*, the Bizet music, the Berlioz overture, and the Grieg suite at the top.

One wonders how a noted conductor of Sir Thomas' standing could be asked to name his choice of ten works for a beginner, and then be given a figurative slap in the face by not taking into account his own recordings, particularly when in several cases they have been rated by so many as the best. It must be assumed that the list was devised by someone who as was either unfamiliar with the excellent recorded work of Sir Thomas, or insensitive to it.

We are wholly in agreement with the choice of Walter's performance of the *Leonore Overture*. We should have recommended that a choice be made between Beecham's *Unfinished* and Koussevitzky's — both are fine sets; and in view of the fact that the consensus of opinion has given Furtwängler the palm for his magnificent reading of the *Pathétique*, his far better recorded version, or that of Ormandy, should have had precedence over the old Koussevitzky one dating from a period in which orchestral recording was only two dimensional. Stokowski's early recording of the Bizet music hardly stands up in comparison with Beecham's more recent one. The Beecham recordings of the Berlioz and Grieg should also have been at least suggested. In the case of the Berlioz, although Fiedler's excellent performance deserves to be recommended, we still feel that Sir Thomas' reading gives conclusive evidence that he—like several of his compatriots—has a particularly convincing way with this composer. As for the *Peer Gynt Suite*, Beecham plays this with unmatched freshness and sympathy.

If any of our readers have friends who are anxious to obtain a list of orchestral works for the start of a collection, we suggest that they give Sir Thomas' list with the recommendations we have noted.

It should be noted at this time that recording realism is a strong point with all new converts to the phonograph, and that only a novice would recommend sets that are admitted by their fondest admirers to be outdated as recordings—sets like Koussevitzky's *Pathétique* (made in 1930), Stock's *Die Meistersinger* (made in 1928), and Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* music (made in 1929). The phonograph moves forward, newer recordings — reflecting the latest developments in the reproduction of sound — are brought out each year to replace those already in existence. And the new converts to reproduced music are interested in the newest and best, just as are those who go to buy an electric refrigerator after using an old icebox for many years.

It seems a pity that a magazine of such international standing as *Good House-keeping* which has an unrivalled oppor-

tunity to speak to millions rather than to thousands, should not have made better use of such a chance.

Record Collector's Corner

Julian Morton Moses

It has been suggested that this department, at each quarter, print a complete list of the important records of the corresponding period thirty-five years ago. Though July, August and September, 1906, were sparse indeed as compared with other months in that gala year of great and everlasting recordings, at least the following were issued to put to shame most vocal pretensions of our own era. This was the so-called "Golden Age" of opera, and perhaps no series of recordings illustrates it quite as well as those put forward in 1906.

VICTOR RECORDS

Emma Eames — Verdi: *Otello*, *Ave Maria* (No. 88035); Bizet: *Carmen*, *Micaëla's Aria* (No. 88036); Mascagni: *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Voi lo sapete* (No. 88037).

Marcella Sembrich — Mozart: *Nozze di Figaro*, *Deh vieni* (No. 88020); Gounod: *Faust*, *Air des bijoux* (No. 88024); Mozart: *Don Giovanni*, *Batti, Batti* (No. 88026); Bellini: *Sonnambula*, *Ah non giunge* (No. 88027).

Antonio Scotti — Bellini: *Sonnambula*, *Vi ravviso* (No. 88028); Leoncavallo: *Pagliacci*, *Prologo* (No. 88029); Verdi: *Rigoletto*, *Pari siamo!* (No. 88032).

Pol Plancon — Gounod: *Faust*, *Serenade* (No. 88100); Faure: *Les Rameaux* (with orchestra) (No. 88020); Schumann: *Les Deux Grenadiers* (orch.) (No. 88024); Berlioz: *Damnation of Faust*, *Serenade* (orch.) (No. 88034); Gounod: *Faust*, *Veau d'or* (orch.) (No. 88038).

Marcel Journet — Gounod: *Faust*, *Veau d'or* (No. 64036); Faure: *Les Rameaux* (No. 74037).

New York Grand Opera Chorus—Excerpts from *Faust*, *Cavalleria*, *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore* (Nos. 64047/50).

Emilio De Gogorza — Bizet: *Carmen*, *Torcedor Song*, with N. Y. Grand Opera Chorus (No. 74046); Flotow: *Martha*, *Porter Song*, with chorus (No. 64051). As Senor Francisco, De Gogorza sang the following: *Sevillanos* (Hernandez) (No. 4767); *Huano Mexicano* (Nuno) (No. 4768); *El Celoso* (Alvarez) (No. 4766); *La Golondrina* (Serradell) (No. 4800) (all 10-inch).

Gustave Berl-Resky — Meyerbeer: *Africana*, *Adamastor* (No. 4729); Varon: *Oh Cuanto Sufró*, and *Dame un Beso* (Nos. 4730/31—8 inch); *El Mar sin Playas* (No. 4772); Donizetti: *Il furioso*

(No. 4774); Tosti: *Pregbiera* (No. 4799—10-in.); Alvarez: *A Granada* (No. 31520); Verdi: *Otello, Credo* (No. 31558—12-inch).

COLUMBIA RECORDS

David Bispham—Schubert: *Hark, Hark, the Lark!* (No. 30021); *Annie Laurie* (No. 30023); Gilbert: *The Pirate Song* (No. 30027).

Anton Van Rooy—*Das Muhlrad, Die Beiden Grenadiere* (Nos. 30028/29).

Ruth Vincent—*Comin' Thru the Rye* (No. 30024); Bemberg: *Nymphes et Sylvaains* (No. 30025).

The most important of these releases were the Eames discs, two of which (the Verdi and Mascagni arias) were re-recorded six months later. In these records Eames revealed the dramatic warmth she always claimed to possess though some old-timers need these reminders that she actually had it. Her *Voi lo sapete* remains one of her most convincing recordings, and as for the *Carmen* aria, it is one of the best versions of this ubiquitous and most improperly sung piece. Sembrich's records were, like those issued during the previous quarter, vocally inferior to her 1905 group. Nevertheless both the *Batti, batti* and the *Ab, non giunge* are remarkable examples of artistic comprehension and bravura style. It is interesting in connection with these two singers to recall what both of them have told the editor, Mr. Reed. Sembrich claimed the horn was unkind to her high tones and that she felt inhibited when she sang into it. According to Mme. Eames, however, De Gogorza was in charge of recording Red Seal artists at this time and he invariably pulled the artist back so far from the horn when they came to their high notes that frequently the effect obtained was as though the singer had been moved into another room. Although the three Eames records are good examples of her artistry, perhaps the *Cavalleria* aria alone conveys the full dramatic intensity of her upper voice. I agree with Mr. Reed that this is one of her most thrilling Victor records. (Perhaps the most thrilling of all recordings of Eames' voice is to be found in the excerpts from the second act of *Tosca*, which the I.R.C.C. re-recorded from a Mapleson cylinder.—Ed.)

The men of the Victor releases leaned heavily on the *heavy* side; there was not a tenor singer in the lot, unless you count the nameless ones in the N.Y. Grand Opera Chorus, fresh from vaudeville triumphs. Their debut on these four records astounded Victor phonograph owners with the hardihood of their voices as well as the effect on the sound boxes of that time.

Scotti was very fond of the *Prologo* from *Pagliacci*. He recorded it no less than five times during his career before the horn. In keeping with the custom of a more stylish period, he omits the tenorish heights to which later baritones aspired and keeps a cheery and sombre quality which some think is more fitting to the words. His other two

selections are well sung and show a flexibility of which collectors do not always suspect him capable.

The two French basses seem to have repeated each other's repertoire here as in their other records. Those by Plancon, except the 12-inch *Faust*, were slipped into the catalogue without announcement, being remakes of earlier numbers with piano accompaniment. One of Plancon's most remarkable dramatic offerings on records is his 12-in. version of the *Serenade* from *Faust*. Outside of the Schumann song, which I do not think fares well in French, the records are all up to the high standards of this impeccable artist. The two interpretations of *Journet* are good, without being outstanding.

The advent of the opera chorus enabled Victor to enhance two of De Gogorza's selections. Both are very good, as are indeed most of this baritone's varied output from the late 1890s to the late 1920s. Of the Spanish group, *La Golondrina* is the most familiar and a gorgeous job of singing it is. As for Berl-Resky, his stature was hardly that of the top-notchers but his recordings are all interesting and frequently exciting.

The three Columbia artists of the three months under discussion are all of interest to collectors. Miss Vincent hardly approaches her male associates in importance, but her singing is most pleasant. Bispham's work falls more frequently into the thrilling class and the way he could render a selection like *The Pirate's Song* is a challenge to many great singers. When played after his interpretation of *Annie Laurie*, it is even more of a challenge. The Van Rooy records are representative of still another great talent of this period.

In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*Snowfall*; and *Where or When*; Claude Thornhill and his Orch. Columbia 36268.

• One of the most significant developments in a long time to occur in the band field is the appearance of Claude Thornhill and his band. A tremendously talented pianist and arranger, perhaps his most conspicuous achievement up until now was the almost single-handed part he played in the success of Maxine Sullivan. It was only to be expected that any band guided by him would have something original and important to offer in the way of popular music-making. Here we have a definitely new voice, and a thrilling one. There are

several features that go to make up the interest created by this band. One, of course, is Thornhill's own highly adroit piano work, which adorns all his arrangements quite liberally. Another is a really amazing dynamic and tonal range, the latter being achieved, in part, by frequent use of clarinets in unison in high register. There is also some of the most understanding and musicianly use of the brass choir that we have ever had in a dance band. The subtleties of nuance and phrasing are of the sort that one expects to find in a top notch symphony orchestra. We elevate Thornhill to that lonely pedestal for all-around brilliance in arrangements that for so long has held only Ellington. The present record is Thornhill's first release on the Columbia label, after several months on Okeh. His outstanding Okeh release was a quite unbelievable record called *Portrait of a Guinea Fawn*, an original that picked more in three short minutes than any dozen records we have heard in the past year. Along with his best efforts, Thornhill naturally performs his share of dance commercials, but these too he handles with skill. *Snowfall*, a hauntingly lovely thing of his own, is Thornhill's signature, while *Where or When* is the most satisfactory recording, in my estimation, of this popular song masterpiece.

AAA—*L'Attendrai*, and *Le Fiacre*; Jean Sablon. Victor 27475.

● Here's a natural in that it combines the most popular French singer of the past decade (most popular with Americans, anyway) with the most popular French song of at least a half-decade, *L'Attendrai*. Actually, originally, it was an Italian song, but it gained its greatest popularity with the French lyric. Sablon sings it meltingly, in a style which combines the mellowness of a Crosby with the finesse of a Chevalier. *Le Fiacre* is a reprint of a recording made in France two years ago.

AAA—*Time Was*; and *Starlight, Starlight*; Eddy Duchin and his Orch. Columbia 36221.

● *Time Was*, like nearly half the tunes we hear these days, is Latin in origin its title being *Duerme* (it's recorded as a Bolero in Cugat's album) and it's a really charming tune, upon which Duchin does a commendable job. A feature of the recording is the use of several female voices in unison—which may not sound exciting, but which is effective.

AAA—*All That Meat and No Potatoes*; and *Get Thee Behind Me Satan*; Will Bradley and his Orch. Columbia 36248.

● The first is another of those pornographic ditties of the *Hold Tight, Want Some Seafood* Mama variety, which, by their naivete and the gusty good humor with which they are presented, somehow become with repetition as inoffensive as a nursery rhyme. As in all Bradley's recordings, the frog-voiced Ray McKinley wins laurels with his highly individual vocals.

AAA—*Rumba Rhapsody*; and *Is It Taboo*; Xavier Cugat and his Orch. Columbia 36230.

● The first is perhaps the most unusual rumba recording ever made. Miquelito Valdes, the Cuban

vocalist recently recruited by Cugat from the ranks of the now defunct Casino de la Playa Orchestra of Havana, here indulges in some masterly *flamenco* singing, with the customary guitar interludes being played by Raoul Soler, pianist in the band. All is done in a strict rumba rhythm, and the results are as novel as they are effective. Cugat comes up with something bright and different from time to time, and here he's fairly outdone himself.

AAA—*Latin Favorites*; Pedro Vargas. Victor set P-71, price \$2.50

● With the Latin cycle currently in full swing, it has been possible for the tenor Vargas to build up a very sizable following for himself in this country purely through his recordings. Vargas, who has never appeared here, is a Mexican who sings charmingly the romantic songs of his native land. Included in the album are such tried-and-true favorites as *La Golondrina*; *Ay, Ay, Ay*; *Siboney*; *La Paloma*; *Estrellita*; *La Borrachita*; *Mi Viejo Amor*; and *Adios Mariquita Linda*.

Other Current Popular Recordings of Merit

AAA—*Spanish Kick*; and *Lois*; Charlie Barnet and his Orch. Bluebird B-11255.

AAA—*Some Saturday*; and *Subtle Slough*; Rex Stewart and Orch. Bluebird B-11258.

AAA—*Yes Indeed*; and *I'd Love You Again*; Teddy Powell and his Orch. Bluebird B-11248.

AAA—*Boulder Bluff*; and *The Boogie Woogie Piggy*; Glen Miller and his Orch. Bluebird B-11163.

AAA—*Til Reveille*; and *Flamingo*; Freddy Martin and his Orch. Bluebird B-11167.

AAA—*Rockin' Chair*; and *Tunin' Up*; Gene Krupa and his Orch. Okeh 6352.

AAA—*Jim*; and *A New Shade of Blue*; Jimmy Dorsey and his Orch. Decca 3963.

AAA—*Melinda the Monse*; and *I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good*; Ella Fitzgerald and her Orch. Decca 3968.

AA—*Serenade to a Sleeping Beauty*; and *Forgive a Fool*; Coleman Hawkins and his Orch. Okeh 6347.

AA—*Top and Bottom*; and *Toasted Pickle*; Cootie Williams and his Rug Cutters. Okeh 6336.

AA—*Don't Take Your Love From Me*; and *If It's You*; Tony Martin. Decca 3879.

AA—*Foo-Gee*; and *You Should Live So Long*; Erskine Butterfield and his Blue Boys. Decca 8569.

AA—*One, Two, Three O'Laury*; and *Fancy Meetin' You*; Count Basie and his Orch. Okeh 6319.

AA—*Hey Doc*; and *Conchita*; Cab Calloway and his Orch. Okeh 6354.

